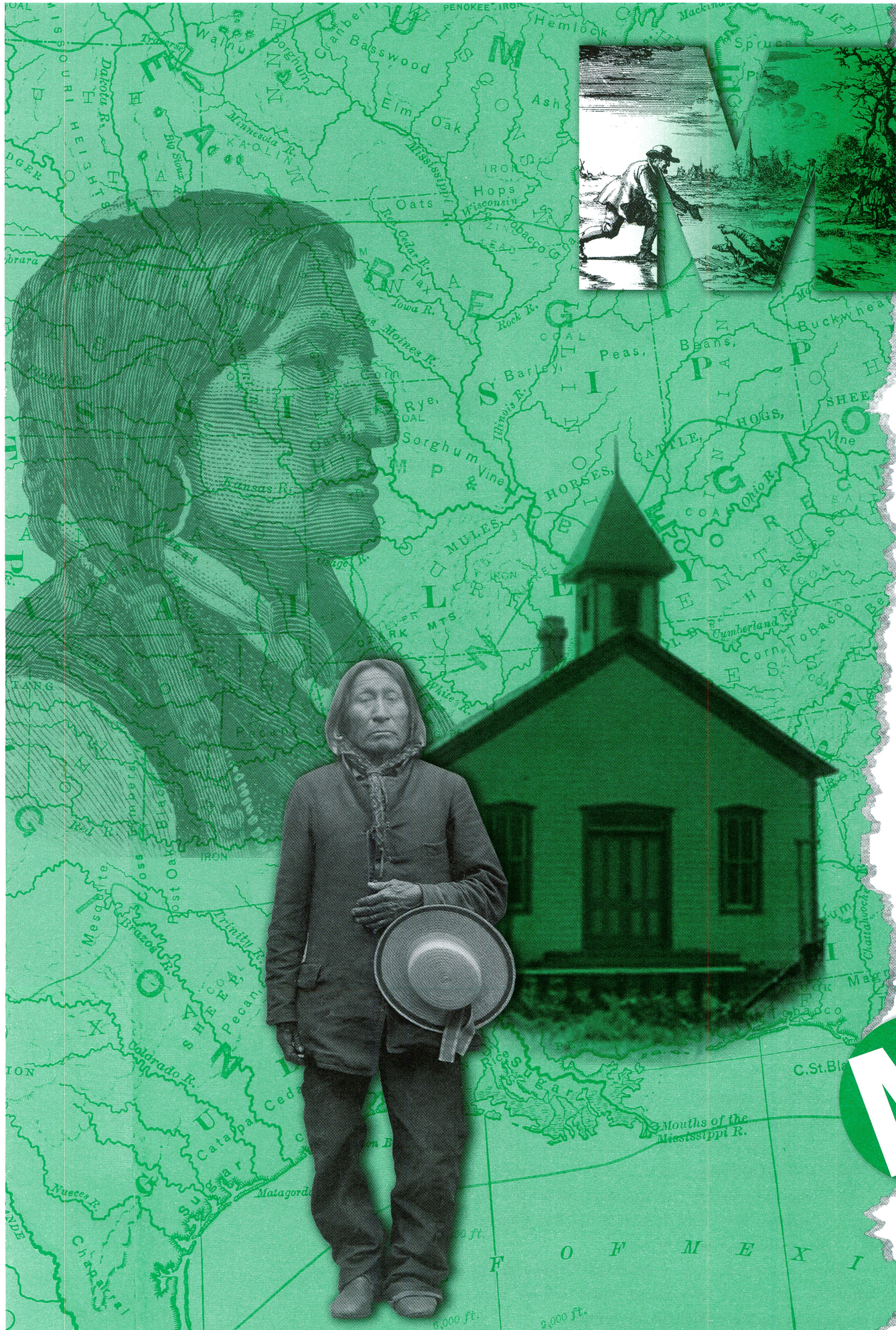


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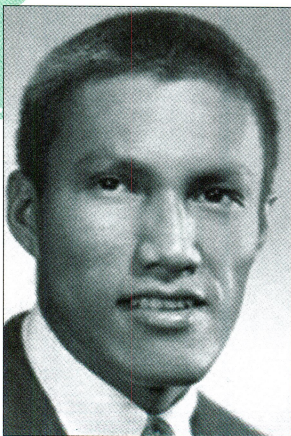


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## In this issue



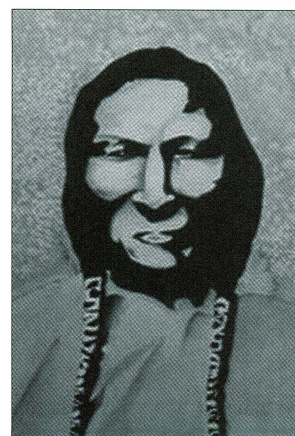
**Page 2:** "Writing a life is sacred work," writes Raylene Hinz-Penner of her current work in chronicling and interpreting the story of Lawrence Hart. Hinz-Penner explores the way Hart has integrated the two traditions he so well represents—Cheyenne and Mennonite. In telling his story, the author also writes of white settlers, the Cheyenne tribe and Mennonite missions. This article is a harbinger of the book-length biography to come.



**Pages 7-10:** The annual directory is our attempt to provide a network of communication among North American Mennonite, Amish and related historical committees, societies, interpretive centers and conference historians. Please send any corrections and updates to the editor.



**Page 14-15:** In the scrapbook pages, Stoesz and Thiesen feature Anna Ruth Ediger Baehr, her missionary parents, and the Native Americans whom they served in Clinton, Okla. Baehr's collection of papers and poetry has recently been given to the Goshen archives.



**Page 16:** The editor looks forward to the **Cheyenne, Arapaho, Mennonite: Journey from Darlington** conference to be held in Clinton, Oklahoma, March 30–April 2, 2006. "The purpose of the conference is to explore connections and expressions of faith through time and culture, using storytelling and other presentations, arts, music and worship."

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Historical  
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# Writing a life

By Raylene Hinz-Penner

*In the fall of 2002 I made my first trip to Clinton, Oklahoma to interview Cheyenne Peace Chief and Mennonite minister Lawrence Hart. I see now that I had been working my way that direction for five years as I asked around, trying to find out who was writing his story. I didn't feel that it was mine to tell, nor did I necessarily choose to do it. A literature teacher and poet, I had assumed a Native American/historian/Mennonite theologian should be the one to write this story. I wanted to read it! Who should write it? Finally, I called Chief Hart and asked him if I could come to Oklahoma with a couple of questions. Lawrence didn't really know me, and I didn't really know him except for his public persona. My people, some of whom Lawrence knows, all come from Oklahoma, and I am a Mennonite, a fellow alum of Bethel College. That's all I had to recommend me when I asked if he'd give me some time. I haven't finished the story yet, but I can share my own experience. I wanted to know how Lawrence worked his way through his Cheyenne and Mennonite roots. I was powerfully drawn to his reconciliation and repatriation work, his restoration and preservation of Cheyenne culture, and I wanted to know how he wove his influences into a life. Tracing his journey includes the history of the white settlement of the Plains, the story of the Cheyenne tribe, the history of Mennonite missions in Oklahoma—in addition to the powerful details of Lawrence's personal life. What I do know at this point is that for me as a writer, the process of interviewing/ listening/ interpreting/reading/bringing to Chief Lawrence Hart's story has been powerful. Writing a life is sacred work. The very experience of talking with Lawrence and trailing him these past two years has been so far a sacred adventure for me.*

*Photo: Lawrence and trailing him these past two years has been so far a sacred adventure for me.*

Credit: Mennonite Church USA Archives-North Newton.

This is a shared article with *Mennonite Life* published online in September 2004 at <http://www.bethelks.edu/mennonitelife/2004Sept/>





Left to right: Connie Hart, Betty (Bartel) Hart, Lawrence Hart, Nathan Hart. 1966.

Credit: Mennonite Church USA Archives-North Newton

Lawrence doesn't give me many details when we talk, which gave me great pause in our earliest conversations. I have come to see Lawrence as choosing not to try to educate me, but rather to allow me to educate myself. Initially, I feared that Lawrence had forgotten all the juicy details that would make his story a great read; indeed, some—he has. But mostly, he has not. The barebones review is simply his way of being, how he does history. Initially, because all my experiences with Lawrence had been listening to his public presentations, I saw him as a speaker, a preacher, an educator, a preserver of stories and history, a man of words for every occasion. He can be that man, and surely, he is always prepared to speak. When asked in advance, he carefully plans articulate public presentations, choosing (this is his gift!) the right words for the audience. When Lawrence and I are talking alone about his own past, however, he speaks slowly, after long pause. He is thoughtful, reticent, and I, as interviewer feel as if I am trying to

follow his mind tunnel back like a flashlight in a long dark passage. Then he lightly touches down on a place, an event. He explains little. I soon came to experience this tactic, not as actual reticence on his part or lack of knowledge about the past, but rather as an unwillingness to coerce my viewpoint. He allows for my interpretation of events. It feels as if he is actually eager to see what I do with what I learn. There is usually more excitement in his eyes when I come back to him thrilled with what I have discovered, taking one of his leads, than there was in his initial suggestion. And for me, returning to a brief reference in a conversation unfolds a new world. I realize as I look back that Lawrence refuses to *emphasize* for me; he refuses to place priority. He respects the fact that his life's story is my interest, and he allows me to pull out the threads as I am able. This is a great gift.

Also, I realize more and more that “the devil is in the details.” Lawrence and I are not always interested in the

same details! What details anyone cares about are personal, cultural, remembered through a private sieve. Sometimes he doesn't remember details I want him to remember for me, but of course, they are my details, my interests, my deductions about what is important in life. It is then that I realize again that this is my journey with Lawrence as my subject, my interpretation of his life, and he is generously sitting still for me to paint his likeness as I see it, not necessarily as he sees himself.

Like other great chiefs, Lawrence speaks in parables. He doesn't tell me what to think or show me how to see. He points. He rarely expresses strong attitudes. He simply recalls; he muses. People, places, events, stories (often in bare bones form) *come to mind* almost as if he had forgotten them until this moment when a certain question forces a recall. I like to think that this is sometimes true, that the very fact of my questioning unearths artifacts in his mind that he had nearly forgotten.

Sometimes I don't pick up on an event or a reference for its significance for weeks or months after we've spoken. I follow my own interests, explore what it is I want to *learn* in what I hear from him, digging after this or that tidbit which I find interesting. Months later I come back and find the kernel of what may be significant. Then, through cross references, the kernel may grow in importance. For example, Lawrence never tells me to go read something! Sometimes I wish he would. This process of conversing with Lawrence is also teaching me something about time. More and more I see the importance of taking time, waiting to see. The writing process becomes an exchange unveiling both our personalities. I am pushy and aggressive and impatient. I recognize these attributes in how I operate, even how I write. My tone has a breathlessness—even my punctuation.



Words spill out and tumble all over each other if I allow them to, and my prose (before revision) is heavy with dashes which link unconnected ideas.

I have sat alongside Lawrence now for stretches of silence. I used to be self-conscious with even a short silence, worrying about what he was thinking, wondering if I should be asking something, fearing that I might be missing some chance in my eagerness to “pick his brain.” More recently, it feels good to wait; I have developed some patience about outcomes, about “getting something” from him to write down. I have come to believe that the waiting is key to what I will write. I feel a constant need to rewrite. I go back now to what I wrote eighteen months ago and I want to write it differently. If I allowed myself to do that, I would never finish. I’d be in a constant state of rewriting because my thinking is constantly shifting; the entire picture is altered with every new discovery. I feel a sense of urgency, however, to share this story, and I press on. What I see now is Lawrence’s way of being in this world. Lawrence is comfortable with who he is today, his personal amalgam of faith and learning. He understands that we each must do this, weaving the ethnic, cultural, historical, racial, gender threads in the way that we must. He will patiently wait to see what it is I will find.

Here’s an example. I don’t remember Lawrence ever making reference to what is commonly deemed “peyote religion.” He spoke from the very first interview of the powerful influence of his grandfather, his grandfather’s strong part in Native American Religion in Oklahoma in the 1930s when Lawrence was a child, but I had to read to find out that his grandfather was, indeed, a major figure in that movement, regionally, for decades, with powerful contributions to the rituals of the movement which last

to this day. Here’s how it came to me in an interview with Lawrence. As a kind of afterthought, he chuckled to remember the time he got on a plane to sit alongside a woman reviewing a book about Native American Religion. He struck up a conversation with her. She showed him the book. He concocted a test on the spot. “If the author of that book has done his homework,” Lawrence told the reviewer, “that book should have my grandfather’s name in it.” Maybe that was the time he also told me that his grandfather had at some point changed his name. The “how” and the “why” of that name change intrigues Lawrence; he is always looking to make more inclusive his ancestry. It seems to me that he worries about who has been lost.

When I finally ordered my own copy of Omer C. Stewart’s *Peyote Religion: A History*, I had already made the trip which retraced Lawrence’s journeys with his grandfather to the Four Corners area, to the Ute Mountain Ute Reservation at Towaoc, Colorado

where John Peak Heart (as he is listed in Stewart’s index of personal names) established a relationship with his friend Walter Lopez, and where they together practiced the peyote religion throughout that region. These journeys with his grandfather, when he was very young, before his parents took him home from his grandparents’ house to begin attending school, were profoundly influential for Lawrence. He spoke with pride during the first interview of the fact that his background includes this strain of Native American Religion for which his grandfather was a missionary. Even though Lawrence was a child traveling with his grandfather to play with the children of his grandfather’s friends in Towaoc while his grandfather traveled the area teaching the rituals of the Native American Religion, these first six years set Lawrence’s destiny.

Stewart says that Southern Cheyenne Peace Chief John Peak Heart came to Towaoc every summer as a missionary to the Ute (traditional enemies of the Cheyenne) beginning about 1916



Corn Stalk and John Peak Heart. Photographed by Rev. Arthur Friesen. Credit: Lawrence Hart.



or 1917,<sup>1</sup> about the same time that Lawrence's father, Homer Hart, who had been baptized by the Methodists while he was away at boarding school, was received into the Hammon Indian Mennonite Church. John Peak Heart was one of the first Oklahoma missionaries to the Ute. He usually stayed with Walter Lopez, described as "a Towaoc shaman and sheepman,"<sup>2</sup> but he conducted religious meetings on several reservations there.

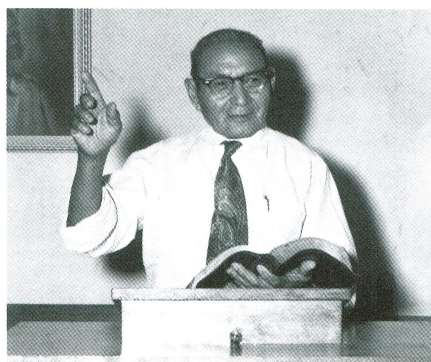
Oklahoma was the cradle of peyotism, according to Stewart, a religion which sprung out of the reservation model set up by the U.S. government in Oklahoma. Stewart believes that the Cheyenne would have known about the peyote experience from their earlier years of raiding into Texas and Mexico. But bringing together these various tribes into the educational system put together for the tribes in Oklahoma (this is, of course, where the Mennonites enter the story), made the tribal leaders eager to band together for the practice of old rituals, for tribal power, and certainly, for tribal *vision*.

Stewart believes that the Indian boarding schools where members of various tribes were brought together, taught English, taught basic Christian principles, taught the ways of white culture, formed the breeding ground for the peyote religion, an indigenous response to Christianity which wed Christian beliefs with Native practices. The list of Carlisle graduates who became peyotists, says Stewart, is well over a hundred.<sup>3</sup>

John Peak Heart was born in 1872, four years after the Battle on the Washita which would result in the Cheyenne being placed on the reservation. A student at Carlisle, he was a candidate for interest in the peyote religion. Stewart believes that the percentage of peyotists on any reservation at any time was likely only 35 to 50 percent.<sup>4</sup> Those who especially took

to it were "young, newly educated Indians who found in it a form of Indian Christianity and often became its leaders. It was a ceremony they felt comfortable with, in which they could celebrate the Christian ideas they had recently learned at school in a setting that was familiar and indigenous."<sup>5</sup> Such a one must have been John Peak Heart. Add to that the fact that when Lieutenant Pratt had rounded up the rebel Indians on the Plains, after the Adobe Walls attack in Texas, for a three-year imprisonment at Fort Marion in Florida, where they learned English and Christian religious instruction, and many went on to study at Carlisle—the Cheyenne comprised the largest percentage of those taken, nearly half. Four young Cheyenne warriors, Co-hoe, Howling Wolf, Roman Nose, and Little Chief became prominent peyotists upon their return to Oklahoma. Those older Cheyenne would have been an influence on John Peak Heart.

I once asked Lawrence why his grandfather quit going to Towaoc; he shrugged. "Perhaps he just got too old." He had certainly done a life's work. Stewart reports that John Peak Heart took his Half Moon ritual (known for its strictness, the John Peak Heart Way) to the Ute before 1918 and continued until 1952, when he would have been seventy years old, visiting Towaoc every summer.<sup>6</sup> His ritual instruction was also learned by Navajo leaders of Shiprock, who came to Oklahoma to study with him.



*Homer Hart, Lawrence's father, 1965.*

Credit: Mennonite Church USA Archives-North Newton.

In her book about her Mennonite missionary father, Rev. Henry J. Kliever, who worked with the Red Moon mission at Hammon, Ruth Linscheid makes reference to the fact that Lawrence's father, Homer Hart, became, at a very early age, an important lay minister with the Mennonite mission. Of special interest to her is the story of Homer's younger sister Lucy, dying of tuberculosis at age seventeen. She says, "Little could be done to help her physically for her parents were strong believers in peyote."<sup>7</sup> As Linscheid tells the story, there was a showdown in the Hart home between the medicine man and her missionary father over Lucy's illness. Apparently, the Mennonite missionary won and Lucy was baptized three days before her death. Later the same year, Homer's mother was baptized. Church records show that Chief John P. Hart too would be baptized some twenty-three years later in 1941. Around the time of Lucy's death Chief John P. Hart had begun his missionary work with the Ute practicing his indigenous Christian rituals. He would continue that work for nearly a dozen years beyond his baptism. He died in 1958, approximately six years after his last visit to Colorado.

Lawrence speaks with pride of his grandfather's mission work with the Utes as significant peace chief work. He thrills over the fact that his grandfather's 35-year mission was to the Utes, the traditional enemies of the Cheyenne. When I prepared to retrace Lawrence's journey with his grandfather to the Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Headquarters at Towaoc, Lawrence instructed us to stop at Two Buttes in southeast Colorado at an unmarked sacred site for the Cheyenne. There, as Lawrence's grandfather relayed to him, Cheyenne warriors resisted an attack by enemy Ute warriors; the Cheyenne warriors were able to save themselves, remaining





This directory lists North American Mennonite, Amish and related historical committees, societies, conference historians, and interpretation centers. *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* publishes this list annually and would appreciate any updates or corrections from our readers. You will also find this listing on our Web site: <http://www.MennoniteUSA.org/history/directory2.html>

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**Hans Herr House Museum**, Henry Benner, director, Donnalee Mexlin, assistant, 1849 Hans Herr Dr, Willow Street, PA 17584, 717 464-4438, Web site: <http://www.hansherr.org>

**Heritage Hall Museum and Archives of Freeman**, Cleon Graber (museum), Duane Schrag and LaNae Waltner (archives), 748 S Main St, Freeman, SD 57029, 605 925-4237, E-mail: archives@freemanmuseum.org (archives) and info@freemanmuseum.org (museum), Web site: <http://www.freemanmuseum.org>

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**Mennonite Genealogy Inc.**, PO Box 393, Winnipeg MB R3C 2H6, (open 2-4 pm, Tuesday-Friday), 204 772-0747, Fax: 204 832-6727; E-mail: MargaretKroeker@mts.net

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E-mail: aredekopp@mennonitechurch.ca, Web site: <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/heritage/mhc.html>

**Mennonite Heritage Museum**, Darlene Schroeder, director/curator, 200 N Poplar, PO Box 231, Goessel, KS 67053, 620 367-8200, E-mail: mhmuseum@mtelco.net, Web site: <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/museums/goessel>

**Mennonite Heritage Village (Canada) Inc.**, Jim Penner, executive director, 231 PTH 12 N, Steinbach, MB R5G 1T8, 204 326-9661, Fax: 204 326-5046,  
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**Mennonite Historians of Eastern Pennsylvania**, Sarah Wolfgang Heffner, director, Joel D. Alderfer, librarian/curator, Mennonite Heritage Center, 565 Yoder Rd, PO Box 82, Harleysville, PA 19438-0082, 215 256-3020, Fax: 215 256-3023, E-mail: info@mhep.org,  
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**Mennonite Historical Association of the Cumberland Valley**, Merle Cordell, chairman, Roy M. Showalter, curator, 4850 Molly Pitcher Hwy S, Chambersburg, PA 17201, 717 375-4544 (Library) or 301 733-2184, Edsel Burdge, editor, *Conococheague Mennonist*, E-mail: ebbpinola@innernet.net

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**Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta**, Colin Neufeldt, chair, Judith Rempel (Library & Archives coordinator), 223, 2946-32 St NE, Calgary, AB T1Y 6J7,  
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**Mennonite Information Center**, R. Wesley Newswanger, 2209 Millstream Rd, Lancaster, PA 17602-1494, 717 299-0954, Fax: 717 290-1585,  
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**Missionary Church Archives and Historical Collections**,  
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**Oregon Mennonite Archives and Library**, Margaret Shetler,  
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NY 10003, 212 673-7970, 212 677-1611, Fax: 212 673-7970,  
E-mail: manager@mennohouse.org, mmfpastor@yahoo.  
com, Web site: <http://www.mennohouse.org>

**People's Place Quilt Museum, The**, Jan Mast, curator  
(jmast@goodbks.com), 3510 Old Philadelphia Pike, PO  
Box 419, Intercourse, PA 17534-0419, 717 768-7101 or 800  
828-8218, Fax: 717 768-3433 or 888 768-3433,  
E-mail: custserv@ppquiltmuseum.com,  
Web site: <http://www.ppquiltmuseum.com>

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**Saskatchewan Mennonite Brethren Archives**,  
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Web site: <http://www.swissmennonite.org>

**The Mennonite Settlement Museum**, Stan R. Harder,  
Hillsboro Museums, 501 S Ash, Hillsboro, KS 67063-1531,  
620 947-3775, E-mail: hillsboro\_museums@yahoo.com

**University Archives and Mennonite Historical Collections**,  
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info@vbmhc.org, Web site: <http://www.vbmhc.org>

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Harrisonburg, VA 22802, 540 434-0657

**Visitor Centre – Telling the Mennonite Story**, Del Gingerich,  
33 King St, Saint Jacobs, ON N0B 2N0, 519 664-3518, Fax:  
519 664-3786,  
Web site: <http://visitorcentreon.mennonite.net/>  
Web site: <http://www.thepeoplesplace.com>

**Western District Conference Historical Committee**,  
Roger Juhnke, 327 Lakeshore Dr, Newton, KS 67114,  
316 283-0452

**Young Center for the Study of Anabaptist and Pietist  
Groups**, David B. Eller, director, Elizabethtown College,  
Elizabethtown, PA 17022, 717 361-1470,  
E-mail: youngctr@etown.edu,  
Web site: <http://www.etown.edu/youngctr/>



atop the Buttes, holding their enemies at bay until they gave up and left. Lawrence's grandfather stopped at the Two Buttes with him to pray en route to Towaoc to minister to the Utes. Lawrence has stopped to pray there with his son, Nathan; he hopes that Nathan will take his son Micah to pray there also.

After reading Stewart's account of the work of John Peak Heart, I began to see the event of Lawrence's parents coming to take him home from his grandfather's house (across the yard) with all its ceremony in approximately 1939 in a new light. No doubt his parents did want to see to it that Lawrence would start first grade at the local Quartermaster School; they wanted to emphasize education. But one has only to read the missionary writings in *The Cheyenne and Arapaho Messenger* during those same years to recognize why Homer and Jennie Hart, Lawrence's parents, might have needed to bring Lawrence home.

Lawrence's father, Homer, was a highly valued Native Helper for the Mennonite missionary, Rev. J. B. Ediger, during this period at the Hammon Church. While Homer and Jennie Hart lived on the same farm place with his parents John P. Hart and Corn Stalk, longtime midwife for the Red Moon clan of the Cheyenne tribe, Lawrence's parents would have had to consider the Mennonite missionaries' disapproval of the Native American Religion. Rev. Ediger railed against the Native practices while he repeatedly praised the work of the Harts, on their farm and in the church. The Harts were the model Cheyenne family who complied and put up the mailbox so that they could receive the *Messenger*. The Harts were active in the local farming organizations, winning prizes for their produce. Jennie Hart organized canning sessions in her home, putting away food for the winter as the missionaries were constantly begging them to do. For

having the best garden in the district, the Harts won the prize of a pig. The Harts shared their produce, especially with the missionaries. Beyond that, Homer and Jennie Hart were tireless church workers, Homer Hart often conducting services, attending training seminars, performing funerals, and translating for the missionaries. Lawrence's mother, Jennie Hart, taught Sunday School, decorated the church at Christmas, organized the children's Christmas program. They and their children were always mentioned for their memorization of the Christmas story, their sending in answers to the missionaries' Bible quiz questions. They were clearly the backbone of the Hammon church.


Meanwhile, in patronizing tones, Rev.



Jacob B. Ediger, ca. 1915

Credit: Mennonite Church USA Archives-North Newton.

Ediger chastised those who didn't stay home and mind the farm, those who practiced Native ways, sometimes in language that hardly hides his cynicism. Announcing by name the death of "one of our older Indians ... after a long illness," he notes: "That his eyesight failed years ago while he went about 'blowing' on people, giving them what he called the holy spirit did not help his grouchy temper. We often have been sorry for his wife and hope she will soon be at her place again in our Sunday services" (June 1933). One can only imagine what Rev. Ediger said to his assistant, Native Helper Homer Hart, about his father's practice of the peyote religion. Surely, Homer and Jennie Hart must have felt compelled to transfer their son Lawrence from his grandparents' home to their own Mennonite home.

Lawrence would follow his parents' teachings. He would go to a Mennonite college and seminary. He would become an important Mennonite minister and leader. But his grandparents' influence was indelible. He would be the Cheyenne Peace Chief his grandfather hand picked him to be. He was set on a course to shape a faith, theology, and way of life which would recognize the power of the Good News the missionaries brought without denying the pain the Cheyenne had suffered at the hands of the white invaders or discounting the importance of his role as leader of his people, responsible for helping them remember who they were. In the preface to his Social Science Seminar paper (a requirement for graduation at Bethel College), titled "Why the Doctrine of Non-Resistance Has Failed to Appeal to the Cheyenne Indian" a young Chief Hart poses a question to his people: "How soon shall we, if ever, reach the point of pacifism we once practiced long before the coming of the 'spiders'?"<sup>8</sup> His own life would be a steady and tireless journey toward that end. 



Raylene Hinz-Penner, after a long tenure as an English professor and in advancement work at Bethel College, now lives in Topeka, Kans. where she teaches in

the English Department at Washburn University. She and her husband, Doug, attend Southern Hills Mennonite Church. She is a member of the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee.

### (Endnotes)

<sup>1</sup> Omer C. Stewart, *Peyote Religion: A History* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 196.

<sup>2</sup> Stewart, 196.

<sup>3</sup> Stewart, 65.

<sup>4</sup> Stewart, 97.

<sup>5</sup> Stewart, 97.

<sup>6</sup> Stewart, 294.

<sup>7</sup> Ruth C. Linscheid, *Red Moon* (Newton, KS: Linscheid, 1973), 163.

<sup>8</sup> Lawrence H. Hart, "Why the Doctrine of Non-Resistance Has Failed to Appeal to the Cheyenne Indian" (Social Science Seminar paper, Bethel College, 1961).



# Book Review

***Unionists and the Civil War Experience in the Shenandoah Valley*, Vol. I.,** ed. Emmert F. Bittinger, Researched by David S. Rodes and Norman R. Wenger (Dayton, VA: Valley Research Associates, 2004).

During the Civil War years of 1861 to 1865, Mennonite and Church of the Brethren families in the Shenandoah Valley region experienced the pressures of war firsthand, as the Virginia state militia, Confederate government, and Union army all made demands on civilians living in the region. Some of the adult men in these communities voted on the secession question—often under pressure from neighbors agitating for the state to break with the Union.

In 1861, as the war got underway, Mennonite and Brethren men faced conscription into Confederate military units, and those with farms and businesses faced potential destruction of lands and personal property. A local network of “unionists” (also known as “loyalists”) who resisted Confederacy pressures included a number of Mennonites, Brethren, and neighboring folk who opposed the war and also wished to avoid cooperating with the new Virginia-backed Confederate government.

This volume offers detailed primary source accounts of the Mennonites’

and Brethren people’s responses to the unwelcome coming of war to their communities. Here are primary source materials, compiled by David Rodes and Norman Wenger, from records held in the National Archives. These sources are part of a larger body of legal documents originating in the 1870s. In the decade following the Civil War, citizens throughout the South who claimed to have been loyal to the United States government were given the opportunity to present claims for reimbursement for property and materials used for the purpose of Union military campaigns. In the Shenandoah Valley, dozens of claimants came forward to enumerate losses of livestock, foodstuffs, and personal property.

This volume reprints the claims of three dozen individuals in the Valley, most of them Mennonites and Brethren who alleged that they were “Unionists” during the Civil War. Each of these claims for financial compensation were investigated, reviewed, and decided by a three-member panel (consisting of a judge and two former members of the U.S. Congress), known as the Southern Claims Commission. Although the Commission completed most of its work during the 1870s, some claims (and appeals by heirs of the original claimants) dragged on for as many as four decades.

Rodes and Wenger initially discovered these records for Rockingham County, Virginia, as part of genealogical research. But as the volume’s introduction, by Emmert Bittinger, makes clear, these materials have considerably broader value as a window into Civil War era social history. Bittinger points out that the Shenandoah Valley folk comprised “the largest community of Anabaptists living anywhere in the South during the Civil War. Opposing slavery, rebellion, and war, their experience in the midst of the Southern pro-Civil War environment was certainly remarkable and unique

among American Anabaptists” (p. 8).

Each claimant’s record typically includes a petition to have the case heard, a list of losses (ranging from crops to horses to barrels of molasses to fence rails), depositions of witnesses (often neighbors vouching for the claimants’ wartime loyalty to the Union), supporting documents, including claimants’ responses to questions about wartime activities, and final documents explaining the Commission’s decision as to whether the petitioners’ claims should be paid. Surprisingly few claims were allowed: throughout the South, less than 9% were declared valid. In the case of Mennonites and Brethren in the Shenandoah Valley, claims were often disallowed because the petitioners had been reluctant to actively aid the Union army, and because drafted men had sometimes paid substitutes to fight on the Confederate side. These actions were considered by the Commission to be evidence of “disloyalty” and thus resulted in the claims’ dismissal.

On the other hand, these records show a surprising tendency for some Mennonites and Brethren in the Valley toward pro-Union activism. Some Shenandoah Valley residents went out of their way to help Confederate deserters and refugees flee the South through the mountains. These people were part of an “underground railroad” network (not related to the antebellum Underground Railroad for escaping slaves) that provided hiding-place shelters and travel guidance for young men seeking to escape to avoid Confederate military service.

The records also provide evidence about the daily lives of Mennonite and Brethren farm families who stayed on their property through most of the war. Some neighborhoods were ravaged, most notably in 1862 during the Battle of Cross Keys, and in the fall of 1864, when Gen. Philip Sherman’s Union campaign through



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Herman, Stewart M., **Daniel's Line (revised edition).** Shelter Island Heights, N.Y.: Published by author, 2002. \$30. Order from author: PO Box 12, Shelter Island Heights, NY 11965.

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Mast, Mervin, **Family Record of Levi L. and Susan (Gingerich) Mast 1881-2002.** Lagrange, Ind: Published by author, 2002. Order from author: 3160 S 200 W, Lagrange, IN 46761.

Miller, Roy A. S., **Family Record of Moses J. and Elizabeth (Weaver) Hochstetler 1850-2003.** Dundee, Ohio: Published by author, 2003. \$12. Order from author: 9955 Massillon Rd, Dundee, OH 44624.

**Penner Family History Book, 1680-2000.** Published: 2000. Order from: Don and Gladys Wiebe, 311 Quill Cres, Saskatoon, SK S7K 4V3.

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Siegrist, Joanne Hess, **The Rohrer Family of Rapho.** Bird-in-Hand, Pa.: Published by author, 2000. Order from author: 457 Beechdale Rd, Bird-in-Hand, PA 17505.

Stichter, Karen L., **John and Mary (Rich) Good Family History 1725-2003.** Wakarusa, Ind.: Published by author, 2003. Order from author: 104 E Wabash Ave, Wakarusa, IN 46573.

**The Family Record of Samuel B. and Lydia (Weirich) Miller.** 391 pages (includes 2,863 descendant families, European ancestors, stories from migrations, some Pennsylvania Dutch songs). \$24 (postage included). Order from: Freeman Hochstetler, 464 Banner Loop, Concord, AR 72523.

**The Klippenstein Sisters: Anna, Katharina, Sara, and Lena.** Published: 2003. Order from: Gwen Rempel, 2910-51B, Lloydminster AB T9V 1M2.

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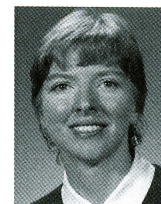
## Book Review ... continued

the region systematically destroyed scores of farms and businesses. Facing starvation, some of the Shenandoah families moved north in late 1864 under the protection of Sherman's army in refugee wagon trains and on foot—most returning home the following year after the war's end.

Together, these documents offer

a rare and detailed glimpse of the interconnected Mennonite and Brethren communities in this Civil War locale, and they shed light on ways in which nineteenth-century American civilians—who abhorred war—struggled as wartime realities came to their doorstep. A number of photographs enhance this work, and a second volume (with additional

records from nearby Mennonite/Brethren communities) is planned for future publication. 



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# Scrapbook page, Goshen

by Dennis Stoesz, Archivist



Anna Ruth Ediger (kneeling, 2<sup>nd</sup> row, far left) attending school in Clinton, Oklahoma, in about 1924. Anna Ruth was born in 1916 and appears to be about eight years old on this picture. During the first eighteen years of her life she grew up in the Cheyenne Indian Mennonite Church community. She would have seen white faces only within her own family, relatives, and visiting missionaries, at school, in the Clinton community, and in visiting other non-Indian Mennonite churches. Her parents, J. B. and Agatha (Regier) Ediger served the Indian Mennonite Church (renamed Koinonia Mennonite in 1966) at Clinton from 1907 to 1947, and their children, two girls and six boys born between 1903 and 1924, grew up speaking High German (parents), some Cheyenne (prayers and hymns at church and phrases from interaction with Cheyenne community), some Low German (relatives and other Mennonites), and English (at school and in the Clinton community).

Source: Anna Ruth Ediger Baehr Collection. Interpretation taken from Beth Bullard; from Vanessa Baehr-Jones, "Great Aunt Anna Ruth," unpublished paper, 3 pages, September 23, 1996; and from obituary of Hilda Edna Ediger Voth, *Manhattan Mercury*, November 27, 2004



Here is a 1943 baptism group of the Indian Mennonite Church, Clinton, Oklahoma. Persons (left to right): Esther Beard, June Beard, Ann Barton, and Dorothy Heap of Birds. Church was renamed Koinonia Mennonite Church in 1966. Original source of photograph was Hilda (Ediger) Voth, a daughter of the Edigers who served this church.

Source: Mennonite Church USA Archives - North Newton Photograph Collection

## Birth naming story

by Anna Ruth Ediger Baehr - Wo'esta, White Buffalo Woman (1916-1998)

Presented to Garden City [New York] Community Church, Women's Association, November 16, 1985



"I was born in southwestern Oklahoma one Thursday in March [23, 1916]. The first part of my name is my grandmother's, the second that of a family friend. The Sunday after my birth, after church, my mother's bed was pulled into the center of the bedroom, I was placed in her arms, and the whole congregation filed into the room, walked slowly around the bed, pausing to touch, pat, stroke my mother and me, murmuring approval and congratulations. Everyone in the congregation except our family was Cheyenne Indian. I was child No. 6 in the family, so the procedure had been well established by the time I arrived. After this greeting of the new baby, the people sat outside on the grass, discussing my attributes and my future, and decided on a Cheyenne name for me: *Wo'esta*, White Buffalo Woman. It was Alfrich Heap of Birds .... who brought the name to my father. I was named for the oldest woman in the community. What I was to hear repeatedly was that *Wo'esta* was a very good woman, and I was to grow up to be a good woman, too. ... I am white of European ancestry, but part of me is Cheyenne."

**Editor's note:** Anna Ruth gives no title to her presentation, except the name of the organization and the date. She placed it in a folder entitled "Cheyenne - Talks." The quote above is the first paragraph of a ten-page typed manuscript. The Koinonia Mennonite Church at Clinton, Oklahoma, was organized in 1899 through the efforts of the General Conference Mennonite Church. Anna Ruth's parents, Jacob B. and Agatha (Regier) Ediger, served this Cheyenne congregation from 1907 to 1946. They had two daughters and six sons born to them between 1903 and 1924.

Source: Anna Ruth Ediger Baehr Collection

Inset Photo: Anna Ruth Ediger Baehr at her 70<sup>th</sup> birthday party, summer 1986. Anna Ruth is a native of Oklahoma and spent the first eighteen years of her life among Southern Cheyenne Indians, whose history and culture are reflected in some of her poetry. She has lectured on American Indians and has read her poetry at universities, fine arts centers, radio stations, churches, schools, the Walt Whitman birthplace, and Cheyenne Indian celebrations in Oklahoma. Source: Anna Ruth Ediger Baehr Collection.



# Scrapbook page, North Newton

by John D. Thiesen, Archivist



Ed and Birdie Burns with their two children and her father Kias (right). Kias was a "native helper." Photo taken in front of J. B. and Agatha (Regier) Ediger's home, ca. 1935.

Below: Oklahoma mission "native helpers" ca. 1930? From left: Willie Meeks, Robert Hamilton, Albert Hamilton, Homer Hart, Kias, Harvey White Shield.



From left: Homer Hart, Jacob B. Ediger, Kias Short Nose, Agatha (Regier) Ediger, Guy Heap-of-Birds. Clinton, Oklahoma, ca. 1935?



Clinton church, ca. 1907?

Left: Madwolf, the first adult Indian Christian at the Haoenaom mission, ca. 1900?

Source for photos on this page: Mennonite Church USA Archives  
– North Newton Photograph Collection







"Why don't we tell the beginning of the story," asked Rich Meyer in the July 1999 issue of this publication. Too often we have told the stories of Mennonite or Amish settlement in North America as though they are the first people to occupy an empty land. The Indians, the "original people" or "first nations are ignored." He argues that the history of any North American settlement should begin at the beginning, with the Native American story.

Neglecting to tell the beginning of the story results in three negative consequences, said Meyer.

- 1) It deprives us of the awareness of "how our possession was tied to the Indians' dispossession,"
- 2) it contributes "to the ongoing denial of their existence and claims," and
- 3) it "leaves them out of our lives."

We are committed to telling the fuller story.

Raylene Hinz-Penner is writing a biography of Lawrence Hart, well known Cheyenne peace chief and Mennonite pastor. In telling his personal story, she also tells the larger of the story of Cheyenne culture and life. She writes of the intersection of cultures, races, and faith expressions. This article gives us a taste of the biography to come.



#### **Mennonite Historical Bulletin**

Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee  
1700 South Main Street  
Goshen, IN 46526-4794

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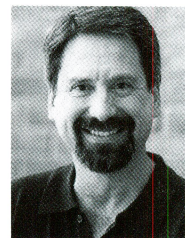
The book's release is scheduled to coincide with the *Cheyenne, Arapaho, Mennonite: Journey from Darlington* conference in the spring of 2006. This event is to "celebrate and review the historical relationship and interconnected faith stories of the native tribes and the very first Mennonite mission begun 120 years ago when Mennonites were called as educators to the Darlington Agency in Oklahoma." Its purpose "is to explore connections and expressions of faith through time and culture, using storytelling and other presentations, arts, music, and worship."

"The Historical Committee of the Mennonite Church USA, sponsor of the conference, seeks to nurture a relationship that honors the past, acknowledges the need for healing wounds, and contributes to the mission of the church." The conference will be held March 30-April 2, 2006 in the Frisco Center, Clinton, Oklahoma." (from the purpose statement)

Planners of the event are James Juhnke, chair, Lawrence Hart, Raylene Hinz-Penner, Jane Janzen, Richard Friesen, and John Sharp.

We invite students, researchers, artists and storytellers to submit proposals.

—John Sharp

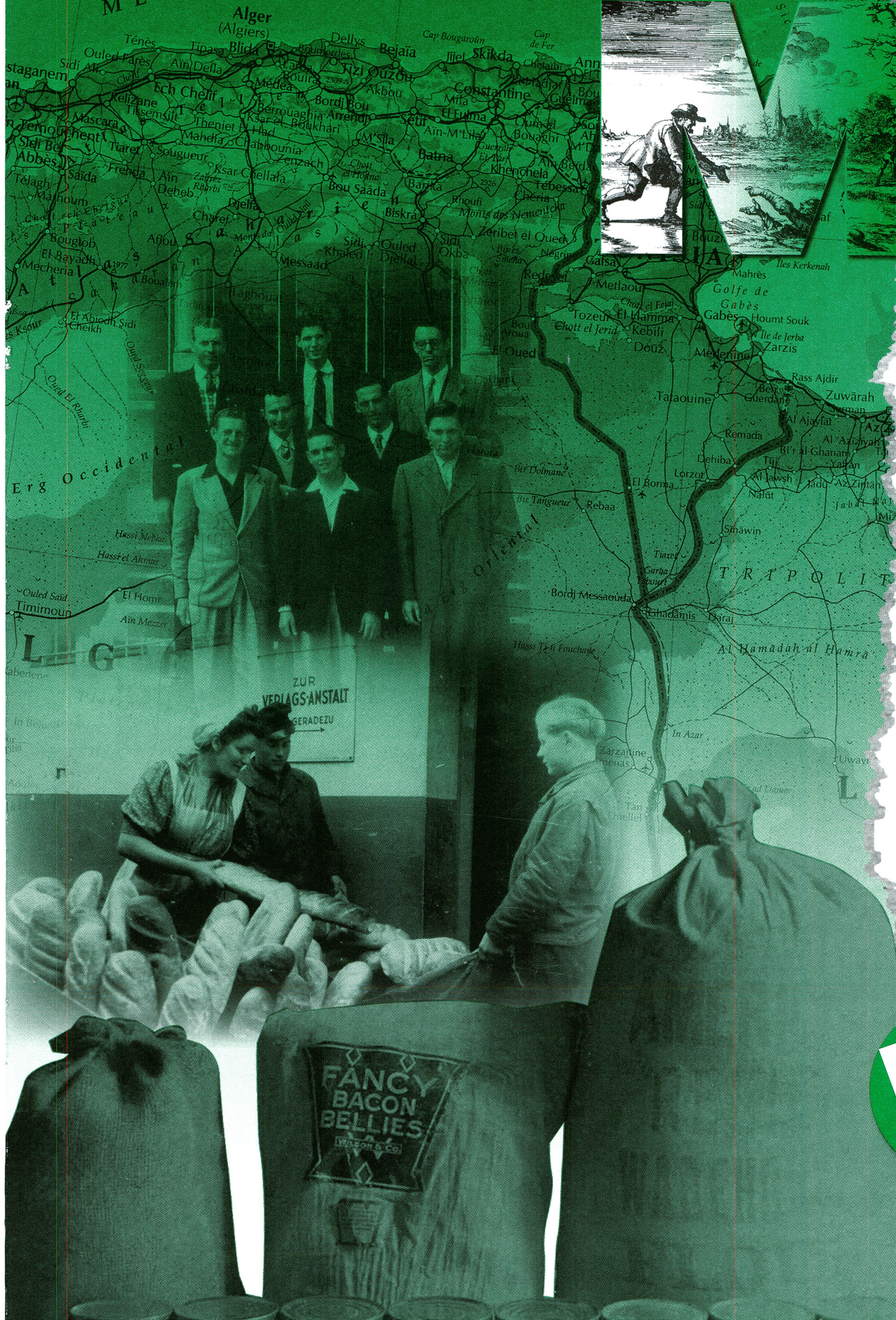


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## In this issue



**Page 2:** PAX began in 1951 as an inter-Mennonite relief venture to provide decent housing for refugees in Germany. It soon expanded to other areas including Algeria. Gerlof Homan tells the story of the men who served in Algeria and the unique challenges they faced.



**Page 11:** On January 25, 1919, seven volunteers left New York for Beirut on the Pensacola. They were the first of 31 men and women who served in the Middle East under the newly formed Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers. Susanna Stoltzfus writes of the (old) Mennonite Church's response to the devastation of World War I.



**Page 14-15:** Archivists Dennis Stoesz and John Thiesen illustrate relief efforts after World War I and II on the Scrapbook Pages.



**Page 16:** Theology and polity often accentuate differences among us. But service and history take us beyond those differences to shared memory and to a common commitment to care for those in need. The editor observes that in service and history we maintain strong links to plain brothers and sisters.

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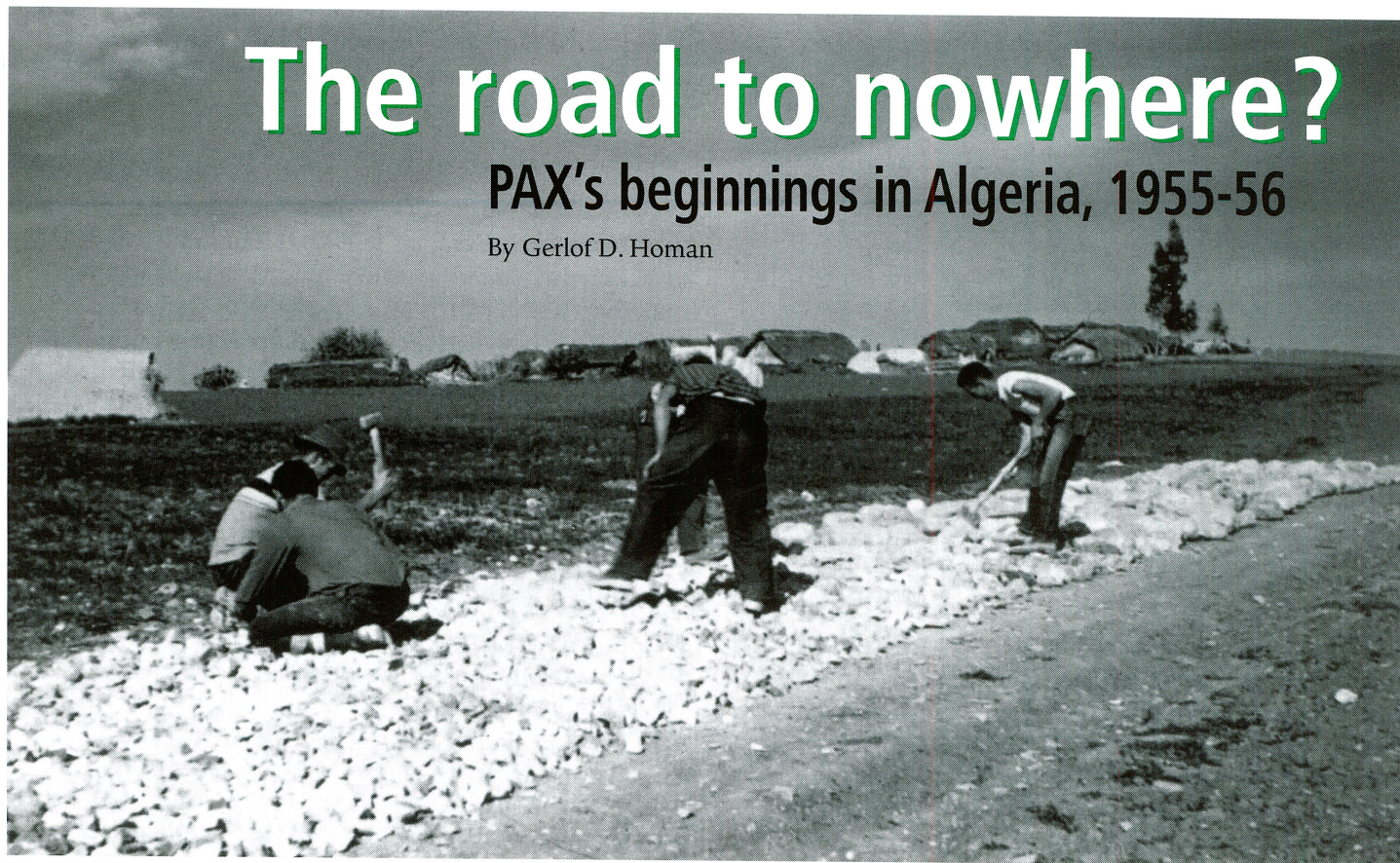




# The road to nowhere?

## PAX's beginnings in Algeria, 1955-56

By Gerlof D. Homan



*"Road to nowhere"* Credit: Robert Weaver

PAX began in 1951 as an inter-Mennonite relief venture to provide decent housing for refugees in Germany. However, already by the middle of the 1950s it was also very much involved in many other projects in various parts of the world. One such PAX venture was Algeria where several PAXers served between 1955 and 1958—some of whom experienced very unique challenges.

A total of some 1180 men served with PAX between 1951 and 1976, the year the program was discontinued. Most of them were young men of draft age who chose PAX as a conscientious objector alternative. But also "older" men, Canadians, and many women served with PAX. The latter served as matrons or in some other supportive role. Frequently, the men's home churches or conferences paid for all the expenses, but in some instances PAXers paid out of their own pockets. One of the Algeria PAXers who did not receive financial or other support from his congregation sold his automobile so he could go.<sup>1</sup>

... today most ex-PAXers  
look back upon  
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with great satisfaction  
as one of the most  
important challenges  
in their lives.

PAX was not for everyone because most of its overseas projects involved hard physical work and suffering some hardships. Yet today most ex-PAXers look back upon their experience with great satisfaction as one of the most important challenges in their lives. Those who served in Algeria in 1955-56 certainly feel that way today.

In 1955 Algeria had a population of about nine-and-one half million most of whom were of mixed Berber-Arab ancestry and overwhelmingly Islam. About one million inhabitants, the so-called colons, were of European descent who controlled most of the economy and cultural life. The majority of the population lived in the Mediterranean coastal area. The rest of the country, which consists of high plateaus and the Sahara desert, is largely uninhabited. The country is almost





*Camp site near Chassériau, 1955* Credit: Robert Weaver

five times the size of France and some three-and-one half times as large as Texas.

Algeria had been part of the huge French African colonial empire since the 1830s. Besides Algeria, France also held neighboring Morocco and Tunisia. While France granted these two countries independence in 1956 she was determined to maintain control over Algeria which since 1848 had been considered an integral part of metropolitan France. “Algeria is French,” it was said. France became even more reluctant to give up this colony when oil was discovered in the Sahara desert in the early 1950s. Furthermore, France was not about to accept another defeat at the hands of colonial subjects. Granting independence to Vietnam in 1954, after a long and bitter war, seemed to be the limit of France’s willingness to reconsider her status as a world power minus much of her empire. Yet, in November of that same year, Algerian nationalists—the National Liberation Front (FLN)—initiated its rebellion. Finally, the pride of the French army became an important obstacle to peace in Algeria. The French army—so badly defeated in 1940 and in Vietnam—was not about to be humiliated again and most certainly not by colonial subjects.

Apparently the year 1955 was not a good time to launch a PAX venture in Algeria, but few Mennonites seemed much concerned about the events in this French colony. In the next eight years France and the Algerians would fight a bitter, savage, and cruel war that would bring down the Fourth Republic and launch a new political career of Charles de Gaulle as president of the Fifth Republic which finally granted Algeria independence in 1962. It is estimated some one million Algerians lost their lives between 1954 and 1962.<sup>2</sup>

During its one-hundred year rule France had done little to advance the welfare of the natives. Considerable advances had been made in the area of health, but in 1955 most Algerians still lived in poverty, were illiterate, and had not

been trained to govern themselves. They, like most former colonial subjects, would face numerous challenges after independence had been obtained.

Not only Mennonites but most North Americans were very ignorant about North Africa. Many Americans had fought there against the Germans in 1942-43, but few bothered to learn more about the region. Among those who knew something about North Africa in the 1950s were a few American missionaries. For many years French authorities did not allow mission activities in order not to “excite the fanaticism of the Moslem masses.” But in 1881 they relented and allowed mission work among the natives.<sup>3</sup>

Probably the first American missionary in North Africa was E.F. Baldwin, a Baptist minister from North Carolina who went to Morocco in 1884 where he joined the NAM.<sup>4</sup> Irene Wenholz was sent to Morocco by the Calvary Baptist Church of Altoona, Pennsylvania, in 1922. Here, after many difficult and trying years, she and Mary Mellinger established “Children’s Haven,” an orphanage for native children in Azroe, located in the Middle Atlas Mountains. In the course of time some PAXmen would provide assistance to the orphanage.<sup>5</sup> In 1948-49 the Gospel Mission Union (GMU), founded in 1891 in Kansas City, Missouri, launched a mission effort in Morocco. Here they purchased “Sunset Farm” near Khemisset which became a gathering place for missionaries and welcomed PAXmen to help with farm work.

The first impulse for the PAX Algeria venture came from André Trocmé, a well-known French pacifist. Trocmé and his spouse Magda Grilli and others had become well known for their successful efforts in World War II to save and rescue many Jews in the French village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon. Here Trocmé served as pastor of a small Reformed congregation whose members were inspired and led by the Trocmés to save persecuted Jews.<sup>6</sup> Trocmé became familiar with Mennonites with whom he had numerous contacts in France and the United States in the post-war period. In fact, he even played a very important role in planting a Mennonite congregation in the Paris suburb of Chatenay-Malabry in 1958.<sup>7</sup>

In November 1953 Trocmé visited Mennonites in Goshen, Indiana, and Akron and Scottdale, Pennsylvania. Here he suggested the launching of a service project in North Africa based on the model of the International Civil Service (SCI). SCI had launched in 1920 in France. It was committed to the principle of non-violence by bringing together multinational volunteers in work camps who assisted with the physical and social reconstruction of war-torn nations. Such work camps, Trocmé felt, would not be designed to convert Moslems to the Christian faith but to show them the true



meaning of Christ. Conversion might come later, he thought. The service project would be international but should be led by Mennonites. Mennonites had something to say to his church, he felt, because their theology and concept of the church was close to his. Finally, Trocmé suggested to ask John Howard Yoder to lead such a venture. "I feel so much deep-felt sympathy between him and me," he wrote, he would gladly welcome him at once at the International fellowship of Reconciliation center in Versailles.<sup>8</sup>

The Mennonite Board of Missions in Elkhart was impressed by Trocmé's plea and authorized its representative in Europe, A. Orley Swartzentruber, to collect data and information on missionary and SCI activities in North Africa. Swartzentruber reported in May 1954 that although SCI was neutral if not indifferent in matters of religion, Mennonites could learn from its techniques. Furthermore, he pointed out, service by committed non-resistant Christians had never been explored in North Africa. So far, Christianity in North Africa had been associated with the western imperialistic system in which "force of arms, machinery, and money" had been supreme. A Mennonite program would be a witness that separated "Christianity from imperialism."<sup>9</sup>

While the Board was weighing the possibility of opening a mission field in Algeria a severe earthquake devastated much of the area in and near Orléansville (now called El Asnam or Ech Cheliff), west central Algeria, on September 9, 1954. It was followed by another in January 1955.<sup>10</sup> Mennonites were now offered a good opportunity to launch a relief effort. A few weeks later the Board of Missions authorized its European representative, John Howard Yoder, to visit the stricken area.<sup>11</sup>

Later to become a well-known Mennonite theologian, Yoder had been studying for his doctoral degree at the University of Basel, Switzerland, since 1950. At the same time he served as the Board's representative in Europe and was involved in various scholarly activities. Yoder did not consider himself an area director with considerable autonomy. In fact, he felt he was "purely a make-shift acting secretary."<sup>12</sup> Trocmé accompanied him on his fact-finding trip to Algeria in 1954.<sup>13</sup>

Yoder recommended Orléansville as the best Mennonite option for the Trocmé plan as there was no other mission organization in the area. Yoder also had contact with local French Reformed pastors who promised aid and met with Alfred

Rolland, the head of an independent mission near Tizie Ouzou in eastern Algeria. Rolland, who had many cordial contacts with French Mennonites, encouraged Yoder to proceed with the plan. However, at the same time he warned not "to place non-resistance ahead of the Gospel."<sup>14</sup>

By May 1955 it was agreed to send twelve PAXmen to Algeria where they would build several two-room houses for about one thousand persons whose homes had been destroyed by the earthquake in the hamlet of Chassériau located some twenty miles northwest of Orléansville. Six of the men would be American and six European. But PAX was unable to find six Europeans and became also concerned about possible language problems. Therefore, initially only three Americans and one non-American, Pierre Nussbaumer, went in 1955. However, later other Europeans did serve.

Funds and materials would be supplied by the French government and the French Protestant Relief Agency. The French Red Cross, local Protestants and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), to whom PAX was responsible, were to provide some food. The project was to be administered by the Board of Missions which would delegate that responsibility to the Mennonite Relief and Service Committee, an agency of the (old) Mennonite Church. In legal matters, the Algeria project would be represented by the Mission Mennonite française a subsidiary of the European Mission Council of the Mennonite Board of Missions. The ultimate goal of PAX Algeria would be "to build a bridge" over which the Gospel could cross.<sup>15</sup>



*Front row: left to right – Wayne Lapp, Robert Weaver, Walter Smeltzer; middle row: Donald Reist, Pierre Nussbaumer; back row: Dwight Wiebe, Albert Meyer, John Howard Yoder* Credit: Walter Smeltzer



The first PAXmen sent to Algeria were: Walter Smeltzer, Wayne Lapp, Robert Weaver, and Pierre Nussbaumer. Smeltzer who came from Elkhart, Indiana, had previously served in Backnang, Germany and Vienna, Austria. Wayne Lapp was from Kalispell, Montana, and had served in Enkenbach, Germany; Robert Weaver was from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and also served in Enkenbach.<sup>16</sup> Pierre Nussbaumer was a Mennonite farmer from Reinigues, Alsace, and would serve as interpreter. Nussbaumer was Swiss but lived in France.<sup>17</sup> Since none of the PAXmen spoke French he would play a very important role. Accompanying the men was MCC representative Donald Reist who also spoke French. He would return to France in the fall. In age the PAXmen ranged from twenty to twenty-seven. Like some other PAXmen, not all had chosen PAX as an alternative to military service. All were Mennonite.

In those days PAXmen received very little or any orientation. The first Algeria PAXers were briefly introduced to their new assignment at the *Foyer Mennonite* located in Valdoie, a suburb of Belfort, France. The *Foyer Mennonite* belonged to the Association Fraternelle Mennonite and housed a children's home but also served as a meeting place for French Mennonites and MCC. Here the men met from May 4 to May 7. At Valdoie they met the colorful and dynamic European PAX director, Dwight Wiebe, John Howard Yoder, and MCC representative, Albert Meyer. Their orientation was very brief, and not long enough for them to obtain even a smattering of the French language.<sup>18</sup>

They left on Saturday, May 7, for Marseille where they boarded the ship *Ville d' Alger*. Most of the 330 passengers were Algerians. During much of the nineteen-hour voyage the men slept on the top deck in their sleeping bags. They arrived at Algiers on May 9 where they were greeted by the local Reformed pastor André Chatoney, head of the French Emergency Relief Committee, Pierre Muller, a former Mennonite and pastor of the Reformed Church in Bougie, Algeria, and André Trocmé. The latter happened to be in Algiers where he was involved in a literacy project. The men were especially appreciative of Trocmé's "friendliness."<sup>19</sup>

The next day they left by train for Orléansville where they were greeted by Georges Plet, pastor of the Reformed Church in Reliance, near Oran. They went by truck to Chassériaux.

It took some time for the men to get organized, establish some kind of routine and to orient themselves. Obtaining water and food was one of the more time consuming activities for Chassériaux did not much have to offer. Much of the food had to be purchased in nearby Orléansville which was about twenty miles farther north. Since the men had initially no transportation facilities they often hitchhiked

or used their bicycle. One time Weaver and Lapp were unable to get a ride back from Orléansville and had to walk four hours in the dark before they reached their tents. The transportation problem was finally resolved in October when they were allowed to purchase an automobile. Yet, throughout their stay in Algeria the men's life style, as recommended by John Howard Yoder, would remain "primitive."<sup>20</sup>

During their stay near Chassériaux, the men had to cope with stifling heat, often exhausting them, and strong desert winds, the so-called sirocco, which one time tore one of their tents to shreds. They also battled mosquitoes and occasional health problems such as dysentery. A disaster befell them when their cooking tent burned as a result of an accident. While trying to break in a new frying pan, one of the men used too much oil, causing an explosion.

They did enjoy their contact with local Arabs many of whom were given nicknames. Initially the Arabs viewed the PAXmen with some suspicion—even thinking they were spies. They had not met many Europeans who treated them with respect and who came, not to exploit, but to serve them. Soon the PAXmen were invited into their humble homes and even to an Arab wedding. An Arab boy, Mohammad, was allowed to stay with them for several days. Neither of the men had any kind of medical training, but they freely shared their medication and very limited medical knowledge with the Arab population. At one time Weaver cleaned an Arab's head by removing dung and puss and applying peroxide. On another occasion they rendered first aid to an Arab boy who had been severely burned after touching an electrical power line. Weaver and Lapp were less successful when they offered an Arab to remove a bad tooth with a pliers. The tooth broke off, but the Arab still thanked them for their "dental service." By the end of 1955 these first Algeria PAX men might not have accomplished much in rendering material aid to the Arabs, but they had built bridges of trust.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, the men had not been building homes. By the time the men arrived the housing need was no longer as acute as it had been in 1954 as many of their primitive homes had been restored. Yet, local Arabs would still very much appreciate better housing. In mid-August the local Caid gathered villagers and assigned them houses to be built by the PAXmen.

But there remained an element of uncertainty: Would the owner of the land where the houses were to be built be willing to sell this land? We do not know all the facts of this complicated land transaction. According to Nussbaumer, the land belonged to Georges Peters, a French colon. But





*PAXers in front of completed PAX house near Flatters, 1956* Credit: Mark Conrad

Peters had for many years allowed a local Arab to use this land. It was this Arab and not Peters who allowed the local authorities and the Protestant pastors to build homes on the land. Walter Weaver learned that actually five families owned the land of whom four had died leaving many heirs. He believed Peters owned three-fifths of the land with at least eleven natives owning the rest of some fifteen acres. Apparently, Peters was willing to trade his share with someone else.<sup>22</sup>

Whatever the situation, Peters was greatly annoyed about the disposal of his land without his consent. He was not unwilling to help local Arabs and even told Nussbaumer he would have donated the land if he had been approached. However, for some reason, not clearly understood, Peters decided to allow some construction to go forward until the men were ready to put the roofs on. At that point he would take legal action. Yet, on various occasions in the fall of 1955 Peters made it known he was not willing to sell. But at the same time he did allow the building of a road which led to the site where the homes were to be built. Furthermore, he treated the PAXmen with considerable kindness and generosity. So, perhaps the illusion was created he might not take action and sell the land after all. A visit by John Howard Yoder and various Protestant ministers did not bring a solution.<sup>23</sup>

Along one side of the hill, upon which the homes were to be built, ran a slanted animal trail that led to the road between the village of Flatters and the highway to Orléansville. It was decided to convert this trail into a road by leveling and broadening it. For this purpose the men would dig big rocks

out of the bed of a nearby stream or *oeid*. All of this work would involve rather heavy manual labor. Building equipment was dropped off on May 20 and the men began paving the road. In late July they even dug the foundation for the first house. Yet, the element of uncertainty gnawed at the men's morale, and they often wondered if Peters would be willing to sell.<sup>24</sup>

A boost in morale was the arrival of three additional PAXmen, Carl Smeltzer, Mark Conrad and J. Ben Yoder who came in early October 1955. Like his brother Walter, Carl came from Elkhart, Indiana, and had previously done PAX work in various places in Germany. Conrad came from Albany, Oregon and worked in Wedel, Germany. Yoder's family was Amish from Belleville, Pennsylvania. He had done PAX work in Germany and was anxious to go to Algeria where he could apply his carpenter's skills.

These three PAXmen received several weeks orientation in Algiers before they went to the Chassériaux.<sup>25</sup>

On December 3, 1955, came the bad news they had feared for along time: Peters did not want to sell his land. Although the Protestant pastors considered legal action to force the sale of the land, such a step would take two or three years. Protestant church leaders and local officials all blamed each other and the PAXmen probably also blamed John Howard Yoder. Weaver undoubtedly reflected the feeling of all when he expressed his dismay, sadness, and even anger. They had gathered over seventy loads of rocks during the past seven months, built four hundred yards of roadway, and started to build the first house, he pointed out, but all they had to show for was "A Road to Nowhere." "Surely," he felt, "there must be a few acres in this barren land" that must be available for their project. He could not understand why it had to be "this spot of land that Monsieur Peters didn't want to sell." He also felt they had let down the Arab population. For months they had identified themselves with the natives who had come to trust and accept them believing the PAXers were going to help them. Now they would suddenly have to leave the area.<sup>26</sup>

However, Walter Smeltzer viewed it more optimistically and compared their experience with that of Paul and Silas's stay in prison. God had something to show them and brought them here; all they had to do was to continue as He would lead them. To him this was only the starting point of their stay in Algeria. "Why be a sad Christian?" he asked. A few weeks later when the men left Walter noticed sadness among the natives. Apparently, their time had not been wasted, and he felt "God's presence on the hill."<sup>27</sup>



The Board of Missions and PAX now had to resolve the impasse. Returning the men to Germany and to concede defeat did not seem to be a good solution. It was, therefore, decided to assign the men to different Protestant missions in Algeria hoping that in the meantime a new building site could be found. In the next few weeks the campsite was broken up and the PAXmen, except for Walter Smeltzer whose term of service was up and returned home in late December, were sent to the Rolland Mission, Ménerville, and Djemma Sahardij.

The Rolland mission was started by Émile Rolland (1864-1934), a Peugeot automobile worker from the village of Valentigney, France. With financial and moral support of two small Baptist churches, Émile decided to join The Mission to the Kabyles or Kabyle Mission, later called North Africa Mission. In 1897 the Rollands, consisting of Émile, his spouse Emma Voos and two children, moved to Djemma Sahardij (*gathering of fountains*), a small mountain village located east of Algiers inhabited by the Kabyles, a Berber tribe. In 1902 the Rollands became independent missionaries, calling themselves the Mission évangélique française en Kabyle or the Rolland Mission. In 1907 they moved farther east, to the village of Tizie Ouzou. Here the Rollands built various facilities such as a refuge for unmarried expecting women, a children's home, a youth center, dispensary, and a workshop for making rugs, blankets, and wool. Over the years the Rollands had contacts with the Mennonites of Montbéliard, France, who had provided them with some financial support. Through French Mennonites, MCC learned about the Rolland Mission.

In December 1955 and January 1956 five of the PAXmen, Carl Smeltzer, Weaver, Conrad, Yoder, and Lapp went to the Rolland Mission where they performed a large amount of repair and maintenance work in the facilities some of which were in a state of disrepair. The Rollands extended a warm hospitality to the men who soon felt very much at home in an environment that appreciated French culture and not to be awakened during the night by barking dogs and tents flapping in the wind. The Rollands were very pleased with the PAXmen's work, their commitment to Christian service, and their ability to perform so many different tasks. When the men left on January 30, Émile Rolland read Psalm 133 and in a short speech expressed his appreciation for the PAXers' work and the Christian fellowship they had enjoyed together. They all sang "God be with You till We meet again."<sup>28</sup>

Daniel Rolland wrote many years later:

Towards the end of the year [1955] we had the good fortune to receive a group from the Mennonite Central Committee who had come from the United States to rebuild homes in the region of Orléansville which had



been made a disaster area by an earthquake.

These young men, accustomed to manual labor and being good Christians, stayed with us for more than one month to perform important badly-needed maintenance to our buildings. They spoke only English, and the communication was not easy, however, we experienced a profound communion of faith and prayer.<sup>29</sup>

The men left the Rolland mission in late January 1956, but in the months following often returned for brief visits to enjoy the family's hospitality and love.

At that time and later the men noticed much military activity in the area. They had noticed some of it in the Chassériau area, but in the part of Algeria the nationalist guerrilla fighters or *fellaghas* were much more assertive and often engaged the French army in various skirmishes. The Rollands became quite concerned about their own safety, but the PAXmen never seemed to have been bothered much by all the military activity. "For some reason," Weaver noticed, "we PAX guys are not tuned in enough to be frightened."<sup>30</sup> Carl Smeltzer even felt that fear was a lack of trust in God.<sup>31</sup> The PAXmen were like most Americans who, except for members of the armed forces, had never seen or experienced war. Nor did PAX or MCC consider the situation threatening at that time although the horrors and savagery of the war received wide publicity. In fact, PAXmen did not seem much interested in the colonial question and





French-Algerian relationships in general. They identified themselves with the Arabs but did not understand all the complexities of the French colonial system. Did they believe the French were sincere in trying to raise the Algerians' standard of living and well-being?

The men noticed the same kind of French military activity in the Djimaa Sahardij area. One January 9, Nussbaumer, Carl Smeltzer, and Conrad went to this small mountain community where they would take down the old NAM building. There they were cordially received by the missionary couple Bernard and Joyce Collinson. Their task was completed in a few weeks.

Next these four men and Weaver and Lapp, two PAXmen who were still at the Rolland Mission, went to neighboring Ménerville where they were asked to build a prefabricated home for the local Protestant pastor, Etchin. Here the men lived in the sanctuary of the church which had no toilet- and shower-or bathing facilities. Thus, as in Chassériaui, the men had to improvise their own toilet "facility" and bathed in a local Turkish bathhouse.<sup>32</sup>

Their task in Ménerville was not completed until late April. But not all six stayed until the day of completion. Nussbaumer returned home in mid-February 1956 and Lapp and Conrad in early March. Weaver was sad to see the three men, with whom he had shared the entire difficult Chassériaui period, leave. Pierre, he felt, had been the "steady

force in all of their ups and downs" and the "one person who could help us understand the French and all of the confusion around our trying to get something accomplished at Chassériaui." He had become a good friend to all of them. Henceforth, they would have to rely on their "pig French."<sup>33</sup>

Fortunately, at this same time a Swiss volunteer, Jean Pierre Claude joined them. Claude was not Mennonite. His parents had been missionaries in Belgium where he became acquainted with Mennonites. It was John Howard Yoder who asked him to go to Algeria where he would stay for four months. He was most welcome especially because of his mastery of French and his electrical skills.<sup>34</sup>

A new PAXman, Kenneth Nussbaum, from Apple Creek, Ohio, joined them in early February and stayed until the latter part of March when he departed for Algiers and later Flatters. Claude and Conrad left in late March for Flatters leaving Carl Smeltzer and Weaver to complete the Ménerville project. This they did by late April. Subsequently, these two joined the other PAXmen at Flatters.<sup>35</sup>

While the men were at Tizie Ouzou, Djimaa Sahardij, and Ménerville, John Howard Yoder, Paul Widmer, pastor of the Open Plymouth Brethren Church in Oran, and his brother Pierre, a prominent Alsatian Mennonite pastor, and most likely also Rolland and Trocmé, had been negotiating for a new building site in the village of Flatters located a few miles east of Chassériaui. These negotiations were successful. Under the arrangements the government would provide many of the materials.<sup>36</sup>

Also by spring 1956 additional PAXmen arrived: Jacob Schrock, from Kalona, Iowa, John Shearer, from Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, Carl Beyeler, from Waynesboro, Virginia, Marvin Moyer, from Goshen, Indiana, and a Swiss nurse, Annie Haldemann. The latter would provide much-needed medical care in the area. Except for Haldemann, all PAXers had previously served in construction in Germany. It was not until later that PAXers would go directly from the United States to Algeria.<sup>37</sup> Thus by early June there were a total of ten PAXers at Flatters.

Work began in late March 1956. In spite of the often stifling heat and frustrations with local builders, the work proceeded very well, and by the time three of the 1955 PAXers, Weaver, Carl Smeltzer, and Conrad left, six houses had been built and two were almost finished. They were encouraged in their work by Mr. and Mrs. Trocmé who came to visit them on May 19.<sup>38</sup>


Carl Smeltzer, Weaver, and Conrad, the last of the original Algeria PAXers, left on June 16. A few days before they



departed Weaver went back to the old Chassériaux building site.

PAX remained active in Flatters until late 1958 when it was decided to discontinue the program. At that time some thirty-three houses had been built, but the political situation had changed for the worse. It was no longer safe for PAXmen to work in this area because of intense military activity. Furthermore, French authorities often viewed the PAXmen as rebel supporters and in 1957 demanded the removal of Annie Haldemann who ministered to Algerians.<sup>39</sup>

Topographically, the PAX road near Chassériaux led to nowhere. However, this road did not symbolize PAX's work in Algeria. Perhaps we can never estimate the impact of PAX's presence in that area. Yet, we do know Algerians had been able to witness a different kind of the Christianity whose message was one of service and not colonial domination. PAX's presence also helped to prepare the road for MCC and Mennonite Board of Missions involvement in later years. They stayed until 1978.<sup>40</sup>

Émile Rolland best summed up the PAXers' work on April 22, 1956. On that Sunday Robert Weaver was back at the Rollands for a brief visit. During the morning service Rolland preached on Luke 8:4-21 in which Jesus told about the parable of the sower whose good seeds fell on the ground. This sermon helped him and perhaps all other PAXmen to view their work in perspective.<sup>41</sup> Just as the sower went about his task with no guarantee of the outcome of his work one might not always know if and when PAX work in Algeria and elsewhere in the world would sprout and bring forth fruit. Fortunately, we do know that in many cases it did. 

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*has written about European, American and Mennonite History. His most recent book is American Mennonites and the Great War, 1914-1918 (Herald Press, 1994).*

#### (Endnotes)

<sup>1</sup> Urie Bender, *Soldiers of Compassion* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1969); Calvin W. Redekop, *The PAX Story: Service in the Name of Christ, 1951-1976* (Telford, PA: Pandora Press, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria, 1954-1962*, rev. ed. (London: Papermac, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> Willy N. Heggoy, *Fifty Years of Evangelical Missionary Work in North Africa, 1881-1931* (Hartford, CT: The Stanford Seminary Foundation, 1960), 18-21.

<sup>4</sup> Philip P. Hallie, *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed: The Story of the Village of Le Chambon and How Goodness Happened There* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979). After the war Trocmé traveled for the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) and he and Magda founded the Maison de la Reconciliation in Versailles which became the headquarters of the IFOR for France and the Continent. Trocmé was also one of the founders of Eirene, an international Christian Service organization. Some PAX men worked for Eirene in Morocco in the 1950s. In 1953 he traveled and lectured in the U.S. These lectures became the basis of his book: *The Politics of Repentance* (New York: Fellowship Publications, 1953). He strongly opposed the French war against Algeria and the nuclear arms race.

<sup>5</sup> Correspondence with Robert Witmer and A. Orley Swartzentruber.

<sup>6</sup> Trocmé to ?, Nov. 19, 1953. Mennonite Board of Missions. André Trocmé. Archives of the Mennonite Church USA-Goshen, Indiana, IV-18-10. Hereafter cited as AMCUSA-Goshen.

<sup>7</sup> Swartzentruber to J.D. Graber and O.O. Miller, May 15, 1954. Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> *The New York Times*, Sept. 10, 11, 12, 15, 18, 19, 1954 and Jan. 13, 1955.

<sup>9</sup> John Howard Yoder, "Report on Algeria," Oct. 1, 1954. MCC-PAX files. AMCUSA-Goshen, IX-19-5.

<sup>10</sup> John Howard Yoder to D.G. Kaufmann, May 22, 1956. MCC Correspondence. John Howard Yoder, 1956. Ibid. IX-6-87; Mark Thiessen Nation, John Howard Yoder: Mennonite, Evangelical, Catholic," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 77/3 (July 2003):362.

<sup>11</sup> John Howard Yoder, "Report on Algeria," Oct. 1, 1954. MCC. PAX files. AMCUSA-Goshen, IX-19-5.

<sup>12</sup> John Howard Yoder to J.D. Graber, Nov. 6, 1954. MCC Correspondence 1954. John Howard Yoder, AMCUSA-Goshen, IX-6-3-75.

<sup>13</sup> Boyd Nelson to Trocmé and A. Orley Swartzentruber, [May 1955]. Mennonite Board of Missions, 1951-1955. André Trocmé. AMCUSA-Goshen, IV-18-10. Chassériaux is sometimes spelled without an accent on the e.

<sup>14</sup> The author collected data on Algeria PAXers from questionnaires and additional (e-mail) correspondence with them.

<sup>15</sup> Extensive e-mail correspondence with Pierre Nussbaumer.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Weaver diary, May 4-7, 1955. Copy kindly loaned to author.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. May 9, 1955; Robert Reist Report, May 11, 1955. Algeria Reports. AMCUSA-Goshen, IV-18-10.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., passim; interview with Robert Weaver Nov.

2003

<sup>19</sup> Weaver Diary, passim.

<sup>20</sup> E-mail correspondence with Pierre Nussbaumer 2003; Walter Smeltzer Report, Nov. 8, 1955. Algeria Reports. AMCUSA-Goshen, IV-18-10.

<sup>21</sup> Weaver Diary, July 10, 1955.

<sup>22</sup> Information about the new PAXmen based on questionnaires and other contacts with the three men.

<sup>23</sup> Weaver Diary, Dec. 3 and 31, 1955; Carl Smeltzer to Parents, Dec. 8 and 16, 1955. Letters kindly loaned to author.

<sup>24</sup> Walter Smeltzer to parents, Dec. 20, 1955.

<sup>25</sup> Weaver Diary, Jan. 30, 1956.

<sup>26</sup> Rolland, *Combat*, 191.

<sup>27</sup> Weaver Diary, Jan. 19, 1956.

<sup>28</sup> Carl Smeltzer to parents, April 15, 1956. Carl Beyeler, who joined the Algeria PAX unit in May 1956, felt that PAXmen had not been promised a "rose garden" and like soldiers, could expect to encounter danger. Beyeler to author Dec. 20, 2003. In August 1955 Algerians killed several Europeans in and near Philippeville some two hundred miles east of Tizi Ouzou. The French retaliated by killing many natives. The massacre at Philippeville became an important turning point in the war, Horne, *Savage War*, 119-123.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Feb. 18, 1956.

<sup>30</sup> Telephone interview with Jean Pierre Claude, Nov. 2003.

<sup>31</sup> Weaver Diary, passim.

<sup>32</sup> Some of the PAXmen visited the Witmers in Oran where they enjoyed the hospitality of Paul Witmer and his spouse Andrée Kennel. Their son, Michel, spent some time with them in Chassériaux. Ibid., passim. In late May 1956 some of the PAXmen were even invited by Robert Lacoste the French minister resident for Algeria, the new title of the former governor-general. The men met Lacoste in his office in Algiers and were impressed with the minister's interest in and knowledge of their project in Flatters. Lacoste's interest was in economic development. Previously to his appointment in Algiers he had served in Paris as minister of industry and commerce and minister of economic financial affairs. Weaver Diary, May 22, 1956; *Grand Dictionnaire encyclopédique Larousse*, s.v. "Lacoste, Robert."

<sup>33</sup> Information on these PAXmen obtained from questionnaires and Bender, *Soldiers*, passim.

<sup>34</sup> Weaver Diary, May 18, 1956.

<sup>35</sup> European Mission Council Meeting, Aug. 16, 1958. Mennonite Board of Missions. Algeria, 1956-1960. AMCUSA-Goshen, IV-18-13. On November 1, 1957, the house in Flatters in which the PAXmen were living, was fired upon by the French. The latter were returning fire from the Algerians who were hiding behind the house. The PAXmen went down to the floor. Questionnaire from John Shearer; telephone interview with Marvin Moyer, Dec. 2003 and Carl Beyeler to author Dec. 30, 2003; Gerlof D. Homan, "William A. Babcock: An Illinois Paxman in Algeria and Morocco." To be published in the *Illinois Mennonite Heritage*. According to Beyeler and also others anti-American sentiment became more pronounced during and after the Suez crisis of 1956 when the U.S. and the USSR forced France and Britain to evacuate the Suez Canal area. Beyeler also felt the mayor of Flatters was anti-American and wanted the PAXmen out.

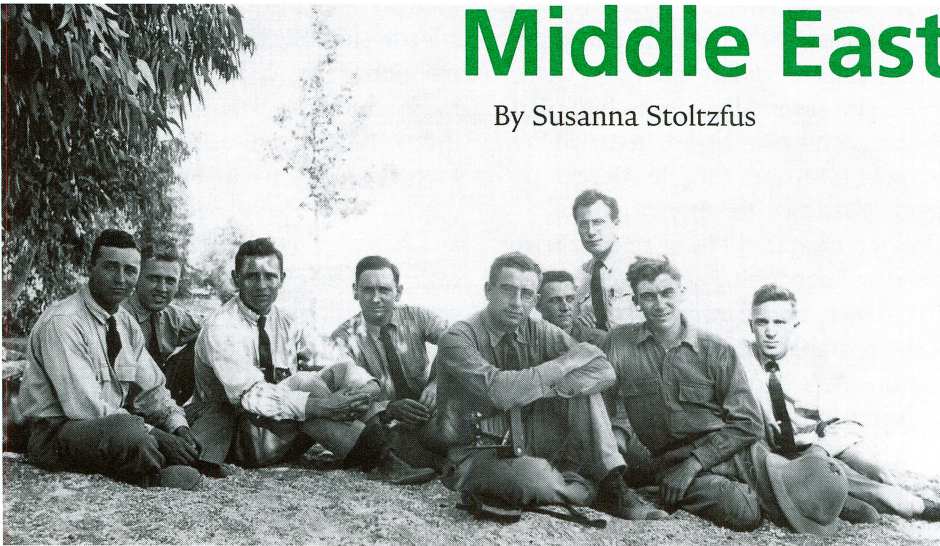
<sup>36</sup> Some PAXmen and Annie Haldemann returned to Algeria after 1962. The last PAXman left in 1971. MCC and the Mennonite Board of Missions were active in Algeria between 1959 and 1978. Hostetler, *Algeria*, passim.

<sup>37</sup> Weaver Diary, April 2, 1956.



# Mennonites and Middle East relief 1919-1923

By Susanna Stoltzfus



... Mennonites felt compelled to find an acceptable, active, positive expression of their peace stance and refusal to participate in the military ...

Following World War II, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), a relief agency for all North American Mennonites, ministered to many different peoples throughout the world who were directly suffering from the war's destruction. Many of these programs were brand new, and Mennonites had scant if any historical knowledge or experience of political, religious, or social aspects of these host societies. However, the Mennonite mission and relief programs which began in the early 1950s in Israel (Mennonite Mission Network) and the Occupied West Bank (MCC) were formed with some deeper idea and understanding of the social and political realities on the field which can come only from actual experience.

After World War I, (old) Mennonites felt compelled to find an acceptable, active, positive expression of their peace stance and refusal to participate in the military using their own Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers (MRCWS), which was formed in December 1917.<sup>1</sup> They were able to find such a peace witness by sending 29 young men and two young women to the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief (ACASR)<sup>2</sup> from 1919 to 1923. However, this partnership began with profound disappointment for the Mennonites, since they learned only after the first seven volunteers were on the field that a semiautonomous relief-mission unit was impossible.

In the first weeks after Armistice Day, November, 11, 1918, layman William Derstine, a member of the MRCWS, met numerous times with ACASR officials and the State Department, trying to find a foreign relief field where Mennonites could give an active, positive witness to their ideals of peace and nonresistance in a semiautonomous relief/mission unit. In a late December 1918 letter, MRCWS President Aaron Loucks stated that "both the State Department and the ACASR invited Mennonites to be part of the expected 200 to 300 volunteers to be sent to the Middle East, with the only connection between Mennonites and ACASR would be related to giving relief."<sup>3</sup>

Photo: Mennonite workers at a gathering along the Sea of Galilee in October 1919. *Left to right* – B. Frank Stoltzfus, Ernest E Miller, William Stoltzfus, Silas Hertzler, Jesse Smucker, David Zimmerman, Amos Eash, Christian L Graber, and Orie Miller. Four Mennonites, Ezra Deter, Paul Snyder, John Wayre and Leon Myer, could not make it to this meeting.

Credit: Silas Hertzler Photograph Collection, Hist Mss. 4-200, Archives-Goshen.



On January 25, 1919, the *Pensacola* departed from New York with the first seven Mennonite workers—Orie Miller, Ezra Deter, Frank Stoltzfus, William Stoltzfus, Christian L. Graber, Silas Hertzler, and Daniel Zimmerman—and two investigators—Derstine and Loucks. Even when they arrived in Beirut on February 20, 1919, these Mennonites expected that in a short time a suitable place could be found where they could form an autonomous relief unit.<sup>4</sup> But by late March, when Derstine and Loucks returned to Beirut from their investigations in Turkey, Miller wrote to his father, “To say I am disappointed puts it very mildly. . . . I felt that the expectations of the whole church, on our leaving, were that we would develop a permanent work along missionary lines. However this appears beyond all possibility in this region at this time. I fear enthusiasm at home will be lessened when Brothers Loucks and Derstine report their findings.”<sup>5</sup>

The church was so enthusiastic about this chance for an active and positive peace witness that even before Destine, Loucks, Graber, Hertzler, and the others arrived in Beirut, another quartet of Mennonites departed for service with ACASR. On February 10, 1919, Ernest E. Miller, Jesse Smucker, Paul Snyder, and Leon Myer sailed on the *Levitation*, which went directly to Constantinople. After waiting five weeks to receive word from either the group of workers in Beirut or from Loucks or Derstine regarding what they should do, they pleaded with ACASR officials in Constantinople to be sent with a supply train to Aleppo, and Snyder, Miller and Smucker were sent. However, Myer was already working at Samson, Turkey. They expected that moving from Turkey to Aleppo would improve communication with their brethren in Beirut. But because those in Beirut understood that this second group would arrive in Beirut on their own, they did not make an effort to

contact them either in Constantinople or in Aleppo.<sup>6</sup>

Without any counsel from either their brethren or Loucks or Derstine, this second group decided to accept placement at Mardin, in the hills north of the Mesopotamian Plain. In fact, only after Ernest E. Miller became the Mardin station director did he learn why none of the first seven Mennonites had tried to contact his own group. In early May, he met his brother, Orie, in Aleppo and learned that the first group had expected his quartet to be sent to Beirut among a larger group of workers who had to be removed from Turkey because of the unstable political situation and therefore had not contacted his foursome in Constantinople.

While ACASR was unable to give the Mennonites a specific area where all their men could form a distinct semiautonomous relief/mission station, many of them were placed in significant positions of responsibility and leadership. For instance, in late May, Orie Miller became quartermaster for Beirut, the port through which most supplies entered for the entire Syrian relief

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program.<sup>7</sup> Then in September, when Maj. James Nichol, who had directed the work in the Beirut District, became the administrative director for the entire Syrian field, Miller replaced him as director for Beirut District.<sup>8</sup> Also, William Stoltzfus became director of the education program at the Syrian Orphanage in Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup>

In early summer Ernest E. Miller and Jesse Smucker were part of the ACASR group that replaced the missionaries at Mardin who were going home. Miller became Mardin Station director, and

Smucker directed the orphanage in Mardin.<sup>10</sup> After being separated from his three traveling companions in the spring of 1919, Leon Myers worked in a bakery in Constantinople and the transport division at Samsun, Turkey.<sup>11</sup> Paul Snyder as chief driver for the Marash relief station may not have had a leadership role similar to those just mentioned, but he had some of the most harrowing experiences. Unaware that Turks had ambushed an occupying French 24-wagon convoy the previous day on the route between Marash and Aintab, Snyder tried to drive a carload of fellow workers to Aintab to get more supplies on January 20, 1919. However, Turkish fighters ambushed the car at the same spot where they had ambushed the convoy of empty supply wagons. Fortunately none of the ACASR workers was seriously injured.<sup>12</sup> While none of the Mennonites had to directly act on their opposition to war while serving with ACASR, Snyder and others did experience the excitement and fright of being in a war zone.

In 1919, the Mennonite Church desired a positive and active witness of peace and nonresistance which they recognized in the ACASR program; because in 1917 and 1918 the only expressions of peace and nonresistance available to most Mennonite draftees were in the form of a negative and inactive witness. Many Mennonites refused to participate in practice drills and to wear the military uniform. Some refused to obey all commands, even when such orders were simply to sweep the floors or to rake leaves. Therefore, when ACASR welcomed MRCWS to join its work in the Near East, the entire church could completely support sending both workers and money even when their men were not in positions of leadership.

Of the 13 Mennonites who left for the Middle East between July 1919 and February 1920, only six seem to have eventually been placed in positions of leadership. Three of these




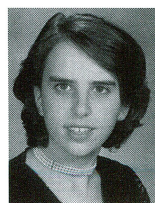
were Ray Bender, who became office manager in Beirut; Martin Weaver, director of general relief for Beirut; and Amos Eash, assistant director of the Syrian Orphanage in Jerusalem. However, four never left service in the transportation division.<sup>13</sup> In July 1921 the last six Mennonites—Nellie Miller, Joseph Detwiler, John Detweiler, Roy King, Herman Kreider, and Menno Shellenberger—left for two years of service with ACASR. In December 1921 Shellenberger died of smallpox. John Detweiler is the only one of the other four men not to be placed in a clear position of leadership, as he is listed as working in the transport division in both Samson and Marash, Turkey, whereas Joseph Detweiler became station director at Mardin; Roy King, transport director for Beirut district; and Herman Kreider, general director of the Aleppo district. Nellie Miller was secretary for Beirut office manager Ray Bender.<sup>14</sup>

The work of this last group of Mennonite volunteers was directly affected when the nationalist Young Turks expelled all the Christians—whether Armenian, Greek, or American—from Turkey in late 1922. For instance, on November 15, 1922, Nellie Miller wrote in her diary, “we are now assuming the responsibility for 4,000 Greek [Christian] refugees including 400 new orphans at Albustan, near Marash.”<sup>15</sup>

When Orie Miller, Ernest E. Miller, and nine other young Mennonite men departed for service with ACASR, they expected to be able to form a single semiautonomous relief/mission unit. Despite the profound disappointment that such a unit could not be formed, MRCWS sent 20 more young Mennonites to work in the Middle East through July 1921. The respectful working relationships between ACASR and the Mennonites came to an end in 1923 because of the following reasons: political realities on the field lowered

the number of workers required by the new Near East Relief (NER)<sup>16</sup>; NER was clearly a secular nongovernmental organization; the internal pressure for an active and positive expression for peace and nonresistance had waned somewhat; and resettlement of the Russian Mennonites had become a pressing need.

The Mennonite Church’s desire in 1919 for its men to form a semiautonomous relief/mission unit somewhere in the Middle East was not fulfilled until after World War II. In the early 1950s both MCC and MMN began programs in this region. In addition to the consistent MCC presence among Palestinian Muslims, always having some programs on at least one side of the Jordan River, there has been a Mennonite mission presence in Israel. Mennonites also have formed persisting relationships in Iran, Egypt, and Iraq, to name only three countries. Mennonites have served through placement with agencies of Mennonite Church USA, other Christian organizations such as Christian Peacemaker Teams, and even organizations such as the United States Agency for International Development. 



*Susanna Stoltzfus is originally from Harrisonburg, Va. She is a 2003 graduate of Goshen (Ind.) College and now makes her home in Goshen.*

(Endnotes)

<sup>1</sup> Guy F Hershberger Collection, Hist Mss 1-171, box 65, folder 12B, entitled “WWI ‘Near East Relief’ (typed Stoltzfus),” p. 2, Mennonite Church USA Archives—Goshen, Indiana (Archives—Goshen). The referenced version of this manuscript is the transcribed one which I typed in the summer of 2004. Hershberger’s original handwritten unpublished and undated 100-plus-page manuscript is in Hist Mss 1-171, box 65, folder 12, entitled “Near East Relief.”

<sup>2</sup> ACASR was formed in 1915 as an umbrella organization for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions’ work in Turkey and the Presbyterian Mission Board’s work in Syria. At that time they were responding to the plight of Armenian Christians in Turkey and Syria. Then in 1919, as missionaries could return and numerous new relief workers arrived in the Middle East following the destruction of World War I, ACASR under Congressional charter became Near East Relief (NER). In 1943, NER reorganized again and still is the Near East Foundation. For more information see [www.neareast.org](http://www.neareast.org).

<sup>3</sup> Letter, Aaron Loucks to William Derstine, December 28, 1918, found in MRCWS Collection VII-2, box 1, folder 10, entitled “Correspondence December 1918,” Archives—Goshen.

<sup>4</sup> February 20, 1919 diary entry, found in Orie Miller Collection, Hist Mss 1-45, box 31, folder 3a, entitled “Diary,” Archives—Goshen.

<sup>5</sup> Letter, Orie Miller to Daniel D Miller, March 31, 1919, found in Orie Miller Collection 1-45, box 32, folder 6, entitled “General correspondence 1919 J-R,” Archives—Goshen.

<sup>6</sup> Letter, Ernest E. Miller to Levi Mumaw, June 13, 1919, found in MRCWS Collection VII-2-2, box 5, folder 9, entitled “Correspondence June 1919,” Archives—Goshen.

<sup>7</sup> Letter, Orie Miller to Truman Miller, May 24, 1919, found in Orie Miller Collection 1-45, box 32, folder 6, entitled “1919 Correspondence J-R,” Archives—Goshen.

<sup>8</sup> Letter, Orie Miller to Ernest E. Miller, September 4, 1919, found in Orie Miller Collection 1-45, box 32, folder 6, entitled “1919 Correspondence J-R,” Archives—Goshen.

<sup>9</sup> Letter, Orie Miller to Jesse Smucker, August 20, 1919, found in Orie Miller Collection 1-45, box 32, folder 7, entitled “1919 Correspondence S-Z,” Archives—Goshen.

<sup>10</sup> Letter, Ernest E. Miller to Levi Mumaw, June 13, 1919, found in MRCWS Collection VII-2-2, box 5, folder 9, entitled “Correspondence June 1919,” Archives—Goshen.

<sup>11</sup> Lists dated May 11, 1922, found in MRCWS Collection VII-2-1, folder 13, entitled “Correspondence May 1919,” Archives—Goshen.

<sup>12</sup> Stanley E. Kerr, *Lions of Marash: Personal Experiences with American Near East Relief, 1919-1922*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1973), 88-90.

<sup>13</sup> Lists dated May 11, 1922 found in MRCWS Collection VII-2-1, folder 13, entitled “Correspondence May 1919,” Archives—Goshen.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

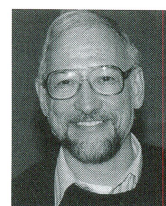
<sup>15</sup> November 15, 1922, diary entry in “Observations of the Armenian Tragedy as a Near East Relief Worker in Beirut, Syria,” by Nellie Miller Mann transcribed by her son, David Mann,” Cleo and Nellie Miller Mann Collection, Hist Mss 1-695 box 6, Archives—Goshen.

<sup>16</sup> See note 2 for more explanation.



# Scrapbook page, Goshen

By Dennis Stoesz, Archivist



The story of Mennonite relief after World War I (from 1917 to 1923) is a multifaceted story. Most of the focus has been on the relief efforts of Mennonite Central Committee in Russia, 1921-26, a story that has been told often. Here are some photographs as seen through the eyes of two Mennonite relief workers. The text for the Mann photos is taken from David Mann, "Observations of the Armenian Tragedy," 2000.

Nellie Marie Miller (*above*) was 24 when served with Near East Relief (NER), Beirut, Syria, 1921-23. She went under the auspices of the Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers and left New York City on August 20, 1921, together with five Mennonite men. She worked as a secretary to Ray Bender, treasurer of the NER. She sent many letters home describing her experiences.

Source: Nellie (Miller) and Cleo Mann Photograph Collection

D. R. (Dietrich R., *right*) Hoepfner (1889-1965), Hillsboro, Kansas, served as a relief worker in France, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Poland, and Russia, 1919-26, under Friends and Mennonite relief organizations. His work in France consisted of reconstruction of homes for returning French refugees and examining eyes and fitting glasses. In Switzerland he worked with transporting Austrian refugee children. Hoepfner's personal papers have been deposited at the North Newton Archives, Kansas, as MLA MS 143.

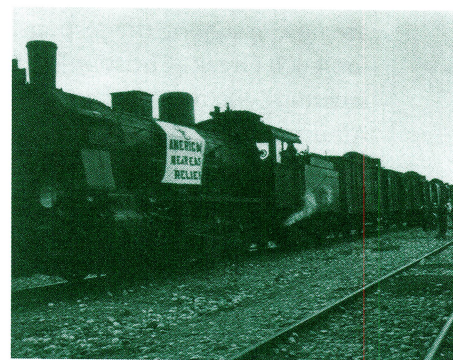
Source: Mennonite Central Committee Photograph Collection



A relief distribution scene in Platovka, Russia, taken by D. R. Hoepfner, 1923. Here are several Mennonites whose cart is loaded with boxes of American milk. Several hundred wagons were needed for the larger transports. It was 10 miles from the train station, Platovka, to the center of the settlement, Klubmikowo. Hoepfner oversaw feeding operations in Orenburg and later directed the tractor operations and importation of horses from Siberia under the auspices of Mennonite Central Committee from 1923-26.

Source: D. R. Hoepfner Photographs, Mennonite Central Committee Photograph Collection

Train carrying refugees, 1921-23, Beirut, Syria, sponsored by the Near East Relief organization based in New York (earlier known as the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief). Photograph taken by Nellie Miller. Armenians were fleeing Turkey following the massacre of the summer of 1915; many orphans, as well as women and men, had made their way to Syria. In late 1922 Turkey took further action, expelling all Christians—Armenian, Greek, or American.



Source: Nellie (Miller) and Cleo Mann Photograph Collection



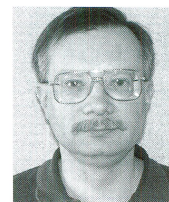
(*Left*) Refugee girls sewing in a vocational school in Syria, 1921-23. By 1921, 22 orphanages had sprung up in Syria, sponsored by Near East Relief (NER), to care for the 130,000 Armenian orphans who had come out of Turkey since 1915. NER's strategic plan was to teach the orphans a trade, and by age 17, send them into homes of relatives.

Source: Nellie (Miller) and Cleo Mann Photograph Collection



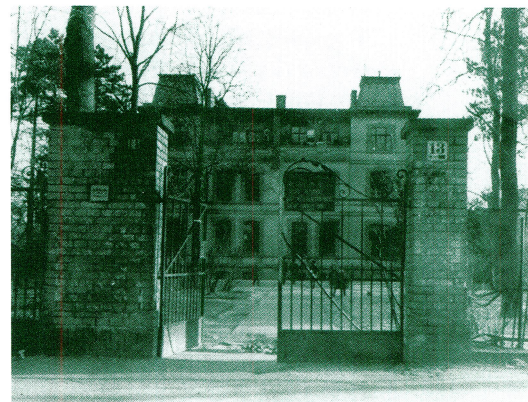
# Scrapbook page, North Newton

By John D. Thiesen, Archivist



1947 Berlin, Mennonite refugees (Peter Dyck's work). The captions listed are original to the photos. (Above) "Flour was given to the baker who in turn baked this bread for the camp refugees."

(Below) "Children leaving school, which was located in a house at 107 Ringstrasse."



"No. 13 Hindenburg Allee, one of the 13 houses where refugees were quartered. For some months the Mennonite refugee community had 50 Chinese DPs as guests in this house and as a part of the larger refugee community. Owners of the house are a Capt. and Mrs. Stennes of Shanghai who have made contact with our relief workers in the Orient."

(Bottom, left) "Scene of one of the bedrooms. Mostly the rooms were more crowded than this—the rooms filled with double-deck beds. The refugees had a wonderful talent to make their crowded rooms comfortable and attractive."

(Bottom, right) "The storeroom with food supplies for the refugee community. During the last months more than a thousand were fed three meals a day. Bread was the principal element of the diet."





## History, Love and Service

"Service and history are our strongest links to our plain brothers and sisters. We find common ground with our spiritual cousins when side by side we swing a hammer on an MDS project, and when we retell the stories from the *Martyr's Mirror*."

Those were my approximate words at a gathering at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center in the spring of 1995. The consultation was called to consider the implications of the GC-MC merger. The question at hand was whether integration would distance us from our plain spiritual cousins. My point was, whether we vote yes or no at Wichita '95—and I hoped it would be yes—we would continue to meet on the common ground of history and service.

Both take us beyond theology and polity, which accentuate our differences, to shared memory and a common commitment to care for those in need.

In our shared memory we find common stories, common spiritual roots, common core commitments, and common identity as brothers and sisters.

In the archives of Bern, Switzerland, there is a painting titled, *Cascade de l'Anabaptiste*, (*The Anabaptist Waterfall*) by Peter Birmann (1758-1844). This waterfall in the Swiss Jura was on the Birs River, which has its beginning in an artesian spring in Tavannes and flows to the Rhine River at Basel. The cascade later disappeared when the river was dammed to produce electricity.

Among the possible reasons the painting was titled *The Anabaptist Waterfall* is the following story which local residents told the artist.

Early in the eighteenth century, "a white-whiskered Anabaptist from the Valley of Moutier" was resting from his journey on an old tree stump by the waterfall. He was clad in "a linen cloak ... without buttons" and wore a hat. He may have been Amish, but at the time, many rural people were still using hooks and eyes. The Anabaptist looked up to see a peddler approaching him distraught and weeping.

"What has happened?" asked the Anabaptist.

"I've been robbed! They've taken everything. I have nothing left!" the peddler wailed.

"Nothing left?" inquired the Anabaptist. "Not even your God?"

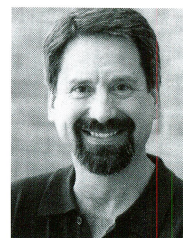
"Well, no, they haven't taken my God," said the peddler.

"Then don't say they've taken everything," chided the Anabaptist. And then he handed the peddler his wallet. "Our Father in heaven prompted me to give it to you. It's a gift from him."

Without waiting for a thank you, the Anabaptist turned on his heels and disappeared.

The core commitment of love and service depicted in this tale, first told by Isaac Zürcher in the July 1992 issue of *MQR*, is echoed in the relief and service efforts after World Wars I and II.

—John Sharp



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### Mennonite Historical Bulletin

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Minding  
Mennonite  
Memory

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## In this issue



**Page 2:** "The space we were in became sacred as the women shared intimate details of their stories with us," writes Linda Christophel of the significant project she shares with Pat McFarlane. "As midwives to those words and to this particular oral history project we feel humbled. As we help birth the larger story, the church can only benefit from the gift that each woman has given as she allowed her story to be shared."



**Page 7:** The first EMC faculty woman to earn a doctor's degree, Mary Emma Showalter Eby is best known for her *Mennonite Community Cookbook*. Since it was first published in 1950, it has sold over a half million copies. Catherine R. Mumaw, who taught with Eby at Eastern Mennonite College (now University), reflects on the life and work of her former colleague.



**Page 14:** The Goshen Scrapbook page features Hettie Kulp Mininger, Vesta Zook Slagel, and Rowena Winters Lark. These three women were teachers, mission workers, service workers, educators, and pioneers. Dennis Stoesz has drawn from the rich treasury of the Goshen archives to give us glimpses into these gifted women.



**Page 15:** A remarkable chapter from General Conference Mennonite history is the story of deaconesses who served in health care institutions, most notably in Newton, Kansas. Their ministry reflected an earlier Anabaptist and Mennonite pattern in the Netherlands and Germany. The 1632 Dordrecht Confession calls for the ordination of these "servants" who were to "visit, comfort, and take care of the needy ... widows and orphans."

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# Midwives for Women's Words

By Linda Albrecht Christophel

On a warm November day in 1999, in Atmore, Alabama, I was helping women from the Poarch Creek tribe prepare potato salad that would be sold the next day at the annual powwow. These women are members of the Poarch Community Church, a congregation affiliated with Gulf States Conference of the Mennonite Church.

As we worked, the women talked with each other about their growing up years in that community. I, who have always loved stories, listened with great interest, asked questions, and began to wonder. I was curious about all the other Mennonite women of color around this country. I wondered what stories their lives held. I wondered why it seemed like I had read very little in church publications about individual people of color over the years. The idea of collecting oral histories of some of these women began to form in my mind.

*Erma Wright (deceased), Chicago, Ill.*

All photographs courtesy of Linda Christophel





*From left: Pat McFarlane; Erma Wright (deceased) Chicago, Ill.; Linda Christophel.*

A few months later, I talked with my friend Pat about my questions and ideas. Our conversation led to planning for how we might begin to collect stories. We thought we might be able to do this work due to our own education and work experience, but just as importantly, our own life experiences of being part of cross-cultural families.

We decided to limit our collection to women near age 60 and over, thinking that probably many in this age cohort had experienced discrimination differently than persons our age. We were interested in hearing their experiences both in and

out of the church. We wanted to hear how they persevered during the difficult times in their lives. We worked from the belief that for much of our history, women's voices have been minimized or silenced. Women of color have been marginalized not only by their gender, but also because of their race. We thought that we would likely find that many of these women had given their lives to raising families, working outside the home, and working in their local congregations. Few if any would have had time to write their individual stories to leave for their families and the church.

The project officially began when we wrote letters to pastors from a sampling of ethnic Mennonite churches, inviting them to recommend women to us. With the understanding from the beginning that this work would not be for profit, we asked to be taken under the wing of the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee. That allowed interested persons to make tax-deductible donations to the work. When the project was completed we would donate all tapes, CDs, and paper to the Mennonite Church USA Archives - Goshen, Ind. We also asked a group representing both genders and three racial groups to serve as our advisory group.

A visit with Barbara Lau, a folklorist from the Duke University Center for Documentary Studies, gave us helpful guidance on gathering oral history, insights from her own experiences, and her blessing to do this work. We, who were not trained historians, were empowered to think that, by collecting these stories, we could contribute to the historical process, including church history.



*Heavenly Voices singers from Poarch, Ala.*

We began with the intent of hearing and recording stories of perseverance and courage when facing discrimination and oppression. While some of those stories were shared, what the women wanted to talk about most often, however, were their faith stories. We followed their lead and recognized that in the end it was their faith that sustained them and helped them persevere through the difficult times. This strand of faith wound through each story



and joined them all together. I remember saying one day, "I wish I could get all you women together in one place so that you could meet each other." And the woman I was with said, "That's okay if we can't now, because, honey, we are all going to be together in heaven."

With the advantage of not being trained as formal oral historians, we were committed as much as possible to use a feminist framework to guide the process. We developed a list of questions to use as a guide only and encouraged each woman to tell her story in her own words. We approached each meeting as if we were in the presence of one of our grandmothers. Being women talking with other women naturally encouraged sharing about feelings and relationships. Conversations took place in their living rooms or church fellowship areas. Sometimes we were able to interview one while a group of her friends listened and added to the conversation. The pace of the interview was often leisurely, at times taking breaks for sharing food together.

When we think back over all the interviews to date, we think of each one individually. Some of those persons have held positions in the organizational structure of the Mennonite Church. Many others have lived lives of service within their own communities. A few joined the Mennonite Church because of the peace doctrine. Most came to the Mennonite Church because that was either the closest church to where they lived or because the pastor or members reached out in friendship to them. We remember Blanche, a Cheyenne woman who was married in the Cheyenne way

by a Mennonite minister. Irene's (Jamaican American) story of being with her husband in his dying has touched many persons who have heard it in her own words. Priscilla's (Navajo) conversion helped her recover from alcoholism, and she received the spiritual gift of singing. Seferina and Gracie (Hispanic), interviewed individually, united to sing again as they had in the 1970s. Bernice (African American), who at 80 remains active in her congregation, during our interview quoted a poem she had learned in high school. Mazie (African American) cut up collard greens for the Florida relief sale as we talked. Louise (Northern Cheyenne), when she began traveling with committee work for the church, was asked by an Anglo woman, "Are you GC or MC?" and needed to ask her pastor when she returned home! We think of Esther (Hispanic), who remembers her childhood in migrant camps as an adventure and only later began to be more aware of the negative aspects of that life. And Yen (Vietnamese), whose grief over her father's death when she was three years old consumed much of her life until her conversion to Christianity.

Lisa Pham, then a pastor of the Vietnamese Mennonite Fellowship in Fairfax, Virginia, was the first to respond to our initial letter of inquiry. She not only made arrangements for us to interview two women from her congregation, but also insisted that we stay in her home during our three days there. She translated for us, as English is the second language for both women. We began to receive personal referrals from a number of individuals who either heard about the project through someone else or read about it in a periodical. Kathy



*Mazie Singleton, Sarasota, Fla.*



*Priscilla Wero, Bloomfield, N. Mex.*





*Irene Moore, Tampa, Fla.*



*Blanche White Shield, Clinton, Okla.*

Roth was a VSer in the Englewood area of Chicago many years ago. She urged us to visit Erma Wright. Erma warmly welcomed us in her home and said, "Come on in, I have lunch ready!" She was grateful for the chance to record her story, even though she struggled with breathing difficulties and was recovering from cancer surgery a couple of years before. We soon realized that Erma was a woman who loved everyone she met. As we walked past her lush rosebushes at the front of her house, she said, "Every day I pray, Lord, just let me be like those rosebushes, overflowing with your love." About a year after her interview was recorded, Erma passed from this earthly life to her eternal one. We feel blessed from having been with her just a short time.

A year later we returned to Alabama, to record life stories of eight matriarchs from the Creek tribe. Olivette remembers that her mother told her they were supposed to be removed in the Trail of Tears, but her ancestors hid in the bushes so they didn't have to go. Assimilation then led to loss of the Creek language and customs. We are honored to give back to the community now eight recordings of oral history plus a later video of the women's music group singing together. Some of their history has now been preserved for generations to come.

A few months into the work we began to refer to this as "God's project." As interviews increased, branches began to develop from the original plan, things we hadn't even imagined as possibilities when we began. Sometimes women we interviewed gave us ideas of other persons who might want to participate. Often the women themselves would ask to pray for us and the project. One woman gave us her blessing for this "worthy endeavor." We were asked to facilitate a seminar at a church conference in Philadelphia where five women we interviewed earlier shared their stories in a story circle. We have given presentations in churches and led a weekend retreat where we encouraged participants to begin writing parts of their own stories. It seemed like one

thing led to another. Pat was able to use material we gathered in her classes at Goshen College.

Pat's role as professor has also allowed the project to branch out beyond the United States. With help from a grant, she was able to travel to Mennonite World Conference in Zimbabwe. There, with the aid of a videographer, she interviewed 11 women representing nine countries. From those interviews another branch formed as connections are now being made between seven African theologians and women theologians in the United States, facilitated by Mennonite Women USA.

Today the work is branching in another area. In the summer of 2004 Pat, Ed Cundiff (videographer), a group of Goshen College students, and I traveled to various parts of the country re-interviewing the women, this time on video. Parts of these interviews along with pieces of interviews from Zimbabwe are currently being produced in a video/documentary to be called **Living Water, Living Faith**, scheduled for release in early summer 2005.

When we sat with a group of women in Los Angeles during one of our first interviews we asked them what they thought we should do with the material we gathered, in addition to their receiving a copy. Almost with one voice they said, "Write a book. We want to read the stories of the other women you are talking with." We are soon ready to begin this phase of the project. Deciding which stories to include and writing to stay true to each woman's words will be an awesome task. In the book **Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History**, Kristina Minister wrote, "Interviewers who validate women by using women's communication are the midwives for women's words." As we sat with each woman, we were extended great trust (as strangers and white women). The space we were in became sacred as the women shared intimate details of their stories with us. As midwives to those words and to this particular oral history project we feel humbled. As we help birth the larger story, the church can only benefit from the gift that each woman has given as she allowed her story to be shared.

*Linda Albrecht Christophel earned a BA from Goshen College and a master's degree in social work from the University of Michigan. She works as a licensed clinical social worker.*



*Her fellow researcher, Patricia Lehman McFarlane, earned a BA from Eastern Mennonite College and an MA from Georgetown University. She has completed additional graduate work at Western Michigan University and Calvin College. She works as an associate professor of communication at Goshen College.*





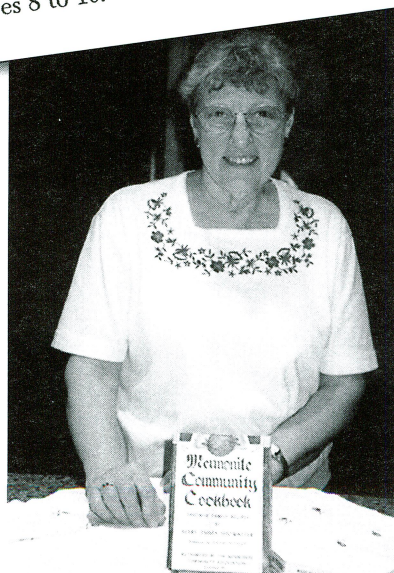
This article is based on a presentation at the memorial service held at Trissels Mennonite Church, Broadway, Virginia, May 11, 2003.

### PORK Baked Ham

2 slices ham, 1 1/4 inches thick  
4 tablespoons brown sugar

1 teaspoon dry mustard  
Milk to cover

Cut slices of meat through center of cured ham.  
Place in a large skillet or Dutch oven.  
Rub with dry mustard and cover with brown sugar.  
Add enough milk to barely cover ham.  
Bake at 325° for 1 to 1 1/4 hours.  
Milk should be absorbed.  
This is delicious!  
Serves 8 to 10.



Catherine R. Mumaw with Mennonite Community Cookbook

*The Baked Ham recipe (on page 69 in the Mennonite Community Cookbook) reflects the rural context where Mary Emma grew up. The cured ham and milk were available from the family farm. [No name was given. I assume it was submitted by the author, Mary Emma Showalter.]* Credit: Catherine R. Mumaw

## A Tribute to Mary Emma Showalter Eby

February 24, 1913–May 3, 2003

By Catherine R. Mumaw

### Introduction

Recently, as I reflected on the life and work of Mary Emma Showalter Eby, I could not avoid thinking about food. So I pulled out of my refrigerator my last two slices of Virginia sugar cured ham, and opened the *Mennonite Community Cookbook*<sup>1</sup> to the “Baked Ham” recipe—the one with mustard and brown sugar and milk! I baked the ham the old fashioned way! What a treat! And what a trip I took into my memories.

The values that guided Mary Emma’s life were deeply rooted in her family (the H.D.H. and Flora “Flossie” Grove Showalter family) and in her church (Trissels Mennonite Church, Broadway, Virginia). It was there where her understandings of compassion and service were formed and nurtured and her love for food and hospitality were demonstrated. These would become hallmarks of her personal and professional life.

Mary Emma was born and raised on a farm near Broadway, Virginia. She was the oldest daughter in a family of eight children. Her high school classes included home economics. This sparked her interest in a teaching career in that field. After



attending junior college at Eastern Mennonite School (1935-37), she worked to earn money to finish her B.S. degree in home economics education at Madison College (now James Madison University). She completed her degree in 1942, a few months after the attack on Pearl Harbor.<sup>2</sup> Although she was prepared to teach, she did not apply for a job in the public schools because she thought she would be expected to support the war, and she could not do that.<sup>3</sup> Her professor was very disappointed.

Just before graduation she was asked by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to work as a dietitian at the Grottoes Civilian Public Service (CPS) Camp beginning in July 1942. She agreed and signed a contract that paid \$40 per month.<sup>4</sup> When her professor learned about this, she asked Mary Emma why she was going to work for those “cowards.” Mary Emma replied that if they are cowards, she is one too! She said that these are her brothers and her

friends. Then her professor offered to help Mary Emma to find materials that she could use in her CPS work.

### World War II Voluntary Service: 1942-46

As a conscientious objector during World War II, Mary Emma was one of 2,000 women from peace churches who were willing to stand against the war.<sup>5</sup> At the Grottoes Camp #4 she was one of three women among the more than 120 men, and she was the **only** woman who worked in the kitchen along with 10 men.<sup>6</sup> In her first year she volunteered to teach nutrition and crafts courses. The nutrition class was so popular among the men that she had two sections.

In that same year at Grottoes, Mary Emma was asked to conduct a cooking school for CPS camp cooks. Two men were selected from each of 15 camps to go to Grottoes. For this she developed a three-month training course and a cook’s manual.<sup>7</sup> These training materials were probably Mary Emma’s earliest

effort to organize and publish materials.

At the end of the first year of her CPS assignment, Orie O. Miller (then executive secretary for MCC) requested that Mary Emma visit camps throughout the country and evaluate their food expenditures and advise changes when needed. The camps were allowed a budget of 42 cents per person per day, and not all camps were staying within that budget. She told Orie she did not want to do that and would rather go abroad and do relief work. And he said, “Well, you have to do this first and then we’ll talk about relief service.” She agreed.<sup>8</sup>

Mary Emma’s six-month assignment as a traveling consulting dietitian took her to all of the CPS camps in the U.S.<sup>9</sup> This gave her the opportunity to learn to know other Mennonite communities and their foods. In the introduction in her *Mennonite Community Cookbook*, she wrote, “I began to observe that wherever I went, to California or



*The cooking school at the Civilian Public Service (CPS) camp at Grottoes, Va. with Mary Emma Showalter in the second row, fourth from the left.* Credit: MCC Photograph Collection, Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen





*Civilian Public Service (CPS) camp at Grottoes, Va. with Mary Emma Showalter in the middle row, second row seated on the right.* Credit: MCC Photograph Collection, Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen

Colorado, to Iowa or Ohio, our [Mennonite] cooking was much the same. Some of the recipes that my mother had recorded in her little book were being used even in the Far West.”<sup>10</sup>

In reflecting on her CPS experiences, Mary Emma said, “I’ve always considered it one of the highlights of my life. **I think of it as the door that opened up all of my professional life**, because it was first just accepting a job that didn’t look all that exciting, and then it was

the cooking school and the traveling.”<sup>11</sup>

In 1944 MCC sent Mary Emma to do relief work as a dietitian in UNRRA’s Yugoslav refugee camps (MCC loan to United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration).<sup>12</sup> After an orientation in College Park, Maryland,<sup>13</sup> she and Nancy Hernley (Conrad) left from Hampton Roads on a large American troop ship, along with 3,000 troops. They sailed to Naples, Italy, and then they traveled onward through

Algiers to their location in the Sinai Desert near Alexandria, Egypt.<sup>14</sup>

Mary Emma said she was “the first woman from this [Harrisonburg] area who went abroad in relief work. That was a brand new thing.”<sup>15</sup> As a pioneer and in that hot desert, she took up the challenge as a dietitian in two camps (El Shatt and Tolumbat). The work included teaching cooks and mothers of young children.<sup>16</sup> She also set up a feeding program for children under ten years old. In February 1945 she wrote that “after weeks of struggling and hoping and prayer the child feeding program has been accepted in our camp. ... I have a nice sized family of [1,075] children and they are a good looking family too. ... It gives one a real sense of satisfaction to help in a program which builds them up to be strong and healthy again.”<sup>17</sup> She was also in charge of a hospital kitchen.<sup>18</sup>



*Outside the kitchen and dining hall at Civilian Public Service (CPS) camp in Grottoes, Va. with Mary Emma Showalter in the center.*

Credit: MCC Photograph Collection, Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen



After nine months in Egypt, she spent another nine months at the MCC center in London,<sup>19</sup> where she was matron, cook, and dietitian.<sup>20</sup> The center also supported a children's home, Taxal Edge.<sup>21</sup> During and after the war, many American and Canadian Mennonite relief workers used London as a point of entry to Europe. The center also was "an England Mennonite home for Mennonite [men] who were in the armed forces, chiefly the Canadian Medical Corps."<sup>22</sup> In a humorous report in the *European Relief Notes* (March 1946), the London Center "guest house" guaranteed Mary Emma's contribution of "Virginia style dinners, suppers, snacks, entertainment and a competent Ping-Pong partner."<sup>23</sup> In one of her own reports, she actually admitted that she sometimes added water to the milk to stretch it to fit the number of people she had to serve!<sup>24</sup>

Mary Emma returned to America in June 1946. She was more interested in being a professional than in being married, which would have been the usual choice for young women in her community at the time.<sup>25</sup> The war was over, so she looked for a teaching job.

That year (1946) President John L. Stauffer invited Mary Emma to come to Eastern Mennonite School to work as the school's dietitian and to teach high school home economics.<sup>26</sup> Mary Emma was also offered a job at Goshen College, but she felt that it was God's will that she work at EMS, even though "women's salaries were shamefully low."<sup>27</sup> Although the gender gap in pay continued for many years, she never complained about it, since she regarded her work at EMS as **doing service** to the Mennonite Church. Margaret Martin Gehman observed that "By example she helped students to see the church and service as a worthy place to work."<sup>28</sup>

### ***Mennonite Community Cookbook***

In 1947 EMS became Eastern Mennonite College. Mary Emma envisioned setting

up a college degree program in home economics. In order to qualify for this, she took a leave to go to the University of Tennessee (Knoxville) for her master's degree.<sup>29</sup> Based on her experiences with the CPS camps, she envisioned a cookbook that would represent Mennonite cookery in Mennonite communities. While in Knoxville, the entire *Mennonite Community Cookbook* was organized with the help of one of her professors.<sup>30</sup> For this project she gathered recipes from Mennonite cooks in communities across the United States and Canada. She relied on 125 women who canvassed their communities and who collected and sent more than 5,000 recipes, including some "precious handwritten recipe books!"<sup>31</sup> From these she chose more than 1,100 recipes to include in the new *Mennonite Community Cookbook*. For her master's degree research, almost 600 cake recipes were tested, from which she selected the 79 that rated a high score in the laboratory evaluations.<sup>32</sup>

Another major part of the book was the photography of table settings and food to illustrate the customs. A friend, Evelyn King Mumaw, remembered the special care with which the food was prepared and the table set for the Grandma's table illustration.<sup>33</sup> Then M. T. Brackbill came with his cameras, and they worked carefully to achieve the best photos.

The first edition of *Mennonite Community Cookbook* was published in 1950. One day the publisher called Mary Emma and asked for 2,000 cookies immediately, to give as samples while marketing the book at autographing parties. Mary Emma said that she would not have time to do this as it was the end of the school year and she had many papers and tests to grade. The reply was that "This is not an option." So she rounded up her students, family, and friends to help. Margaret Martin Gehman remembers packing the "old fashioned ginger cookies" and the "spice

drop cookies" in the little boxes!<sup>34</sup> At the autographing party at Wannamaker's the cookies were distributed to the first 200 who came to see the cookbook.

### **Home Economics Degree Programs**

When John R. Mumaw became president of EMC in 1948, he supported Mary Emma's interest in a four-year program that focused on preparing women for home and family life.<sup>35</sup> The first student enrolled in 1949. In 1954, Doris Good (Bomberger) and Catherine Mumaw were the first two graduates with the B.S. degree in general home economics. Mary Emma later wrote to Doris, "I recall my excitement the day you two home economics majors were called to the platform to get your degrees! Almost as proud as if you were my daughters."<sup>36</sup> And, yes, we both received an autographed copy of her cookbook as a graduation gift.

Mary Emma's vision of a professional degree in home economics would again require some graduate work. In the mid-1950s Mary Emma began her doctoral studies in home economics education at Penn State University. Her advisor, Dr. Hazel Hatcher, was an internationally known author and leader in home economics education. She had a profound respect for Mary Emma as a Mennonite, and encouraged her to do research that would enhance her work in her Mennonite college. So Mary Emma's dissertation focused on the development of the home economics program at Eastern Mennonite College.<sup>37</sup> When she graduated in 1957 with a doctor of education degree, she gained the distinction of being the first EMC faculty woman to earn a doctor's degree.<sup>38</sup>

The next year (1958), Mary Emma initiated a profession-oriented program in home economics education, which was accredited by the State Department of Education. The first students graduated in 1959. Dr. Dorothy Rowe, who was then head of the home economics department at




Madison College, said recently that, "Although the EMC program was perhaps smaller than other programs and it did not receive state money, Mary Emma managed wisely and ran a quality program. She graduated students well prepared for teaching in the high schools and for furthering their education in graduate school. Her program was respected by her colleagues."<sup>39</sup>

To Dr. Rowe, Mary Emma was also the "dean" of Mennonite cookery. She observed that "the introductions to each chapter in her book give insight into her joy in preparing good food and how this love is intertwined in a rich family heritage. ... Having the friendship of Mary Emma and having had the opportunity to work with her is one of the experiences I will always treasure."<sup>40</sup>

Mary Emma lived more than 30 years after she retired. For most of those years she and husband Ira enjoyed their home, their family, their friends, and their church. In 1999, EMU President Joe Lapp affirmed her work with a citation "for her outstanding contribution in home economics and the *Mennonite Community Cookbook*."<sup>41</sup> Nobody had dreamed of such a huge success of the cookbook—by 1996, 37 printings had produced more than 500,000 copies.<sup>42</sup> And her cookbook continues to sell at the pace of 4,000 to 5,000 copies each year, with well over a half million copies in print.<sup>43</sup>

In 1991, after Mary Emma was asked how she would summarize her life in one sentence, she wrote: "I want to be remembered as one who cared and served unselfishly in my role as teacher, wife, mother, and neighbor, in my community and in my church."<sup>44</sup>

And her epitaph? It should read: "Service oriented: little interest in a lucrative career."<sup>45</sup> 



*Catherine R. Mumaw is a retired professor from Oregon State University and lives in Corvallis, Oregon. She attends the Corvallis Mennonite Fellowship. She grew up in the Eastern Mennonite College/University community (Harrisonburg, Va.) and taught in the EMC home economics department for 17 years before working at Goshen College (Goshen, Ind.) in a similar role for 13 years.*

### (Endnotes)

<sup>1</sup> Mary Emma Showalter, *Mennonite Community Cookbook: Favorite Family Recipes*, Philadelphia: Winston, 1950.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Emma Showalter Eby, taped interview for the EMU Oral History Project, 1991.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Emma Showalter Eby, taped interview, 1991.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Emma Showalter Eby, taped interview, 1991.

<sup>5</sup> Rachel Waltner Goossen, *Women Against the Good War: Conscientious Objection and Gender on the American Home Front, 1941-1947*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997. Publisher comments retrieved 29 January 2003 from <http://www.powells.com>.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Emma Showalter, taped interview, 1991.

<sup>7</sup> Albert N. Keim, telephone conversation, 24 January 2003. The cooking school was also mentioned in records obtained from Irene Leaman at Mennonite Central Committee, 4 February 2003, and in Mary Emma Showalter Eby, *Memories ... Reflections of My Life*, 1991. p. 97.

<sup>8</sup> Mary Emma Showalter Eby, taped interview, 1991.

<sup>9</sup> Irene Leaman, records/library and archives manager, Mennonite Central Committee, e-mail communication to Catherine R. Mumaw, 4 February 2003. Information abstracted from letters on file in Akron, Pa.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Emma Showalter Eby, *Mennonite Community Cookbook*, p. ix.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Emma Showalter Eby, taped interview, 1991.

<sup>12</sup> Irene Leaman, e-mail communication to Catherine R. Mumaw, 4 February 2003. Information abstracted from letters on file in Akron, Pa.

<sup>13</sup> In a letter to Orie O. Miller and all the MCC family, 9 January 1945, Mary Emma refers to reporting to College Park in June [1944]. In a letter to the MCC family, dated 1 December 1944, she referred to saying "good-bye" in Washington on 18 August 1944, Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen, Indiana (MCA-G), File IX-6-3, "MCC CPS and other Correspondence 1940-45, File 23, Egypt Office 1945."

<sup>14</sup> Mary Emma Showalter Eby, *Memories*, p. 22. Phyllis Eby Showalter's research confirmed the trip from Naples to Algiers to Egypt. It was reported in a telephone conversation with Catherine R. Mumaw, 20 February 2003.

<sup>15</sup> Mary Emma Showalter Eby, taped interview, 1991.

<sup>16</sup> Mary Emma Showalter Eby, *Memories*, p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> Mary Emma Showalter letter to the MCC family, 3 February 1945. MCA-G, File IX-6-3, "MCC CPS and other Correspondence 1940-45, File 23, Egypt Office 1945."

<sup>18</sup> Her hospital kitchen work at Tolumbat camp is referred to in a letter from Delvin Kirchhover to Orie

and MCC from Cairo, 22 May 1945, p. 3. MCA-G, File IX-6-3, "MCC CPS and other Correspondence 1940-45, File 23, Egypt Office 1945."

<sup>19</sup> Irene Leaman, e-mail communication to Catherine R. Mumaw, 4 February 2003. Information abstracted from letters on file in Akron, PA. Also mentioned by A. Grace Wenger, letter dated 21 January 2003, and notes on the author in Mary Emma Showalter, *Favorite Family Recipes from the Mennonite Community Cookbook*, 1972. She left London for the USA on 10 June 1946.

<sup>20</sup> Dennis Stoesz, MCA-G, e-mail communication to Catherine R. Mumaw, 18 February 2003.

<sup>21</sup> Taxal Edge Convalescent Home for Boys was located in Whaley Bridge via Stockport, Cheshire. Mary Emma lived at 68 Shepherds Hill in London, and provided dietitian services to Taxal Edge. "Movements of Personnel in Northwest Europe." In *European Relief Notes*, Vol. 1, No. 3, London, England, November 1945, p. 12. MCA-G, File IX-13-1, "MCC CPS, Bound Publications. *European Relief Notes*, Vol. I-III, 1945-47, 7/26."

<sup>22</sup> Arlene Sitler, "England" (report on MCC in England), received 13 September 1946. MCA-G, File IX-6-3, "Mennonite Central Committee Correspondence 1945-47, File 30, England Office, 1946."

<sup>23</sup> Edna Hunsberger's witty letter to Arlene Sitler, who was then in France, was published in the Mennonite Central Committee *European Relief Notes*, Vol. 1, No. 7, London, England, March 1946, p. 4. MCA-G, File IX-13-1, "MCC CPS. Bound Publications. *European Relief Notes*, Vol. I-III, 1945-47, 7/26."

<sup>24</sup> Mary Emma Showalter, "Chatter from the Kitchen." In *European Relief Notes*, Vol. 1, No. 6, London, England, February 1946, p. 4. MCA-G, File IX-13-1, "MCC CPS. Bound Publications. *European Relief Notes*, Vol. I-III, 1945-47, 7/26."

<sup>25</sup> Mary Emma Showalter Eby, taped interview, 1991.

<sup>26</sup> Hubert R. Pellman, telephone conversation, 24 January 2003. Confirmed by Phyllis Eby Showalter, telephone conversation, 20 February 2003.

<sup>27</sup> A. Grace Wenger, letter to Catherine R. Mumaw dated 21 January 2003, reported that the other job offer was from Madison College. Mary Emma wrote in her *Memories* that it was Goshen College who offered her a job (p. 113).

<sup>28</sup> Margaret Martin Gehman, telephone conversation, 24 January 2003.

<sup>29</sup> Phyllis Eby Showalter, telephone conversation, 20 February 2003. This information as abstracted from Mary Emma's diaries. Verified by Ethel Showalter Strite in a personal communication, 8 May 2003. Ethel left Bridgewater College to take the position at EMS while Mary Emma was on study leave.

<sup>30</sup> Mary C. Lane, Letter to Catherine R. Mumaw dated 10 January 2003.

<sup>31</sup> Mary C. Lane, letter to Catherine R. Mumaw dated 10 January 2003, and publisher's notes, retrieved 29 January 2003 from <http://www.barnesandnoble.com>. According to Phyllis Eby Showalter, Mary Emma wrote to wives of pastors of Mennonite churches in the USA and Canada in 1947.

<sup>32</sup> Mary Emma Showalter, *Mennonite Community Cookbook*, p. 202. Her master's thesis was: *The Collection, Testing and Selection of Favorite Cake Recipes of Mennonite Families*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1948.

<sup>33</sup> See the photo opposite page 303 in the *Mennonite Community Cookbook*. Ethel Showalter Strite loaned the painted chairs for the photo as reported to Catherine R. Mumaw, 8 May 2003.

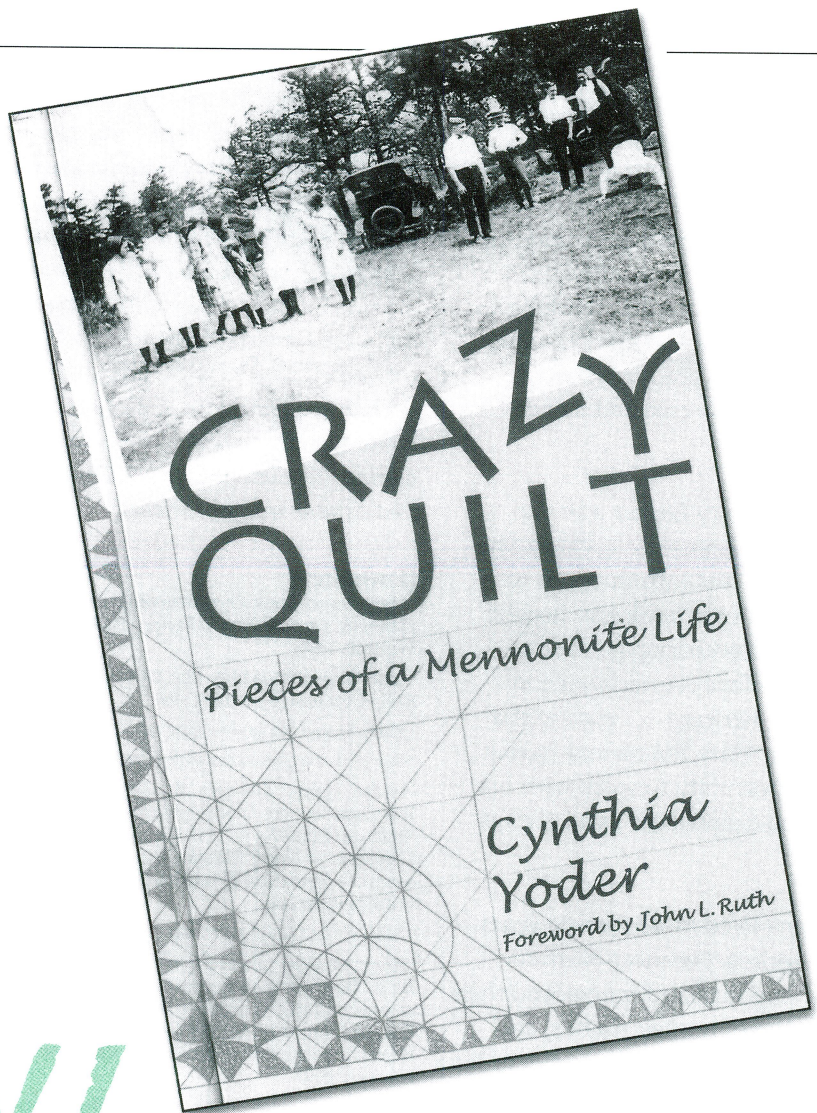
Showalter Eby Endnotes ... cont. on page 13



# Book Review

By Rachel Waltner Goossen

Cynthia Yoder, *Crazy Quilt: Pieces of a Mennonite Life*. Telford, Pa.: Cascadia Publishing, 2003.



When she was in her mid-twenties, Cynthia Yoder, a Goshen College alumna and graduate student living in New York City, struggled with depression. She left her husband, with the encouragement of extended family, returned to her home community to reconnect with relatives living in Bally, Pennsylvania. For the next year, she took a sabbatical from life-as-usual and sought to recover her emotional health in an eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite subculture that she had earlier rejected. Contemplating her self-worth in light of church teachings and the peacemaker traditions in her family heritage, she also pondered the possibility of reconciling with her husband. The resulting tale, Yoder's "pieces of a Mennonite life," celebrates her very personal story, in which she grasps lifelines for hope and healing.

*Crazy Quilt* is maddeningly uneven book. Writing with postmodern sensibilities, Yoder plays with the ironies of an urban bohemian placing herself back in the country among plain-spoken, humility-minded Mennonite elders. She aptly describes the cultural experience of rebelliousness, juxtaposing what she considers to be her personal failures with her paternal grandparents' apparently satisfying lives. Their culture, she notes, is "God's will. . . . They knew what they wanted, and that was the simple life they were living on the Hill with each other and their family" (pp. 78, 98). And yet, for all her insight, Yoder does not plumb her Mennonite heritage as deeply or communicate to her readers as accurately as her subjects deserve. In a casual note to her readers about Mennonite history, she errs in suggesting that European Anabaptist martyrdom began in the seventeenth century, and—seemingly unaware of the historic Amish division of the 1690s—peculiarly explains the Amish-



Mennonite schism as a nineteenth century phenomenon.

Yoder's main literary project during her sojourn among family in eastern Pennsylvania was to record through oral history interviews the life story of her grandparents, whose 65-year marriage stood in contrast to her own marital history. Through this project she drew out a lifetime of reminiscences from her wise but quiet grandfather, whose demeanor contrasted with the irrepressible enthusiasm of her grandmother. Yoder also cast an anthropological eye on their traditions, like "pie night," a Friday evening ritual in which her grandmother baked for any and all family members who wanted to come.

Yoder's recognition of her family's unconditional love and acceptance of her—a self-styled rebel who also aimed to preserve their traditions—is a key theme of the book. Within months of embarking on the oral history project, Yoder writes, her grandparents "were increasingly becoming 'real' to me, like a pair of velveteen rabbits. I'd made all kinds of assumptions

about their perfection as the family elders, and those assumptions were being worn away. Things didn't always work out the way they'd planned ... sometimes life just twisted and turned on its own merry course, and you had to keep up" (p. 145). Ultimately, the grandparents' stories of perseverance, along with Yoder's own experiences in mental health counseling, helped her to gain perspective on her own life.

The book includes family recipes from the kitchen of Yoder's grandmother; as well as diary excerpts from the 1930s, when the grandmother was the age of the author. These are welcome additions to this memoir. A less pleasing aspect is found on the author's website, which promotes the book and carries an unattributed quotation claiming that *Crazy Quilt* is "the first Pennsylvania Dutch memoir written for a general audience." Out of fairness to other authors and to herself, Yoder should retract that statement. 🐰



Rachel Waltner Goossen teaches history at Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas.

## Recent Publications

***Descendants of Andrew and Mary Ann (Stutzman) Mast 1899-2003.*** Order from David A. Wengerd, 8858 County Road 186, Dundee, OH 44624.

***Descendants of Andrew J. Miller and Lamora Ringler.*** 2004. Order from Fred Wagner, wagner73@earthlink.net.

***Descendents of Edward B. & Sarah (Gingerich) Kline 1860-2003.*** Order from John M. Miller, 10571 Spruce Rd., Ossineke, MI 49766-9647.

Warey, Ezra and Mary, ***A Family History of Christain Schwarie and Annie (Hauder) Schwarie and Their Descendants 1789-2004.*** Ann Arbor, Mich.: Cushing-Malloy, Inc. \$11.00 per copy postpaid. Order from authors: 2378 Gravel Washer Rd., Beaver, OH 45613.

More information on these books may be obtained from the Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen College, Goshen, IN 46526; 574 535-7418; e-mail: mhl@goshen.edu

Cont. from page 11 ...Showalter Eby Endnotes

<sup>34</sup> Margaret Martin Gehman, telephone conversation, 24 January 2003. A box of cookies is in the collection of Phyllis Eby Showalter. The information on the accompanying brochure announced an autographing event at the Berks County 8<sup>th</sup> Street store, in the book department on 2<sup>nd</sup> floor (of Wannamaker's in Philadelphia). It included the names of the recipes and indicated that 200 souvenir boxes were made for distribution. This was reported to Catherine R. Mumaw on 10 May 2003. Luanne Austin read about the request for cookies in Mary Emma Showalter Eby, "Cookbook Reminiscences-I" in the "Homemaker's Column" of *The Mennonite Weekly Review*, 6 July 1976, p. 11.

<sup>35</sup> Doris Allegra Good Bontrager, *Opinions About Home Economics Among Students, Faculty and Administrators at a Selected Institution*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, 1979, pp. 51-53.

<sup>36</sup> Mary Emma Showalter Eby, letter to Doris Good Bomberger dated March 16, 1992.

<sup>37</sup> Mary Emma Showalter, *Developing a Plan for Better Acceptance of Home Economics at Eastern Mennonite College*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, 1957.

<sup>38</sup> Hubert R. Pellman, *Eastern Mennonite College, 1917-1967: A History*. Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College, 1967, p. 202.

<sup>39</sup> Dorothy Rowe, e-mail communication to Catherine R. Mumaw dated 23 January 2003.

<sup>40</sup> Dorothy Rowe, e-mail communication to Catherine R. Mumaw dated 23 January 2003.

<sup>41</sup> Joseph L. Lapp, president, Eastern Mennonite University, citation recognizing Mary Emma Showalter Eby, September 1999. "For her outstanding contribution in home economics and the *Mennonite Community Cookbook: Favorite Family Recipes*, published June 1950. Thousands of women and men have learned the worth of good cooking from the favorite recipes you have collected, tested, and selected across the Mennonite community of the United States and Canada. You have provided high-quality recipes that might have been lost through the generations. With over 500,000 copies in print, your excellent publication continues to teach culinary skills as we approach the new millennium."

<sup>42</sup> The only other Mennonite cookbook to rival this record is the *More-With-Less Cookbook*, first published in 1976. In the introduction to that book, Mary Emma unselfishly and fully endorsed the book as a guide to a "caring-sharing" response in our global community. Doris Janzen Longacre, *More-With-Less Cookbook*, Herald Press, Scottsdale, PA, 1976, p. 9.

<sup>43</sup> Information given to Luanne Austin by Levi Miller, Herald Press, Scottsdale, Pa. Cited in Luanne Austin, "Model Mennonite Remembered," Harrisonburg, Va., *Daily News-Record*, Saturday, May 10, 2003, p. 9.

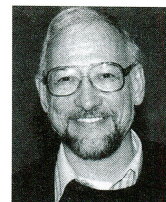
<sup>44</sup> Mary Emma Showalter Eby, *Memories*, p. 168.

<sup>45</sup> Mary Emma Showalter Eby, *Memories*, p. 168.



# Scrapbook page, Goshen

By Dennis Stoesz, Archivist



Below: Hettie Kulp Mininger (1874-1965) about 1950-65, Elkhart, Indiana. "My parents stressed prayer.... And when we left home we thanked our parents for all they did for us. They said, 'Oh you just pass it on to others.'"

Born in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, Hettie graduated from Elkhart Institute, Indiana, in 1900 with a Commercial Degree. She met J.D. Mininger in the Philadelphia mission, were married in 1904, and became long-time mission workers in Rittman, Ohio, 1904-08, and Kansas City, Kansas, 1912-41.

Sources: Hettie (Kulp) and J.D. Mininger Photograph Collection, and "Biography" by Russell Krabill, 1991.



Vesta Zook (1891-1973), on left, Constantinople, Turkey, 1921-22, with Madame Goreinekine (middle) and Vinora Weaver. "Dear Sewing Circle Sisters, ... I am sure that we Americans know little about the horrors of war, what it means to lose practically everything, to be deported from one's home and to be a refugee entirely at the mercy of others... I am very glad to be here."

Born in Topeka, Indiana, in 1891, Vesta graduated from Goshen Academy/Goshen College in 1915, and from Lewis Institute in Chicago, earning A.B. and B.S. degrees. She taught home economics, was dean of women at Goshen College, and served as director of the Russian children's home in Constantinople (today Istanbul) from early 1921 through to the summer of 1922.

Sources: Vesta Zook Slagel Collection; Letter May 24, 1921; "Mennonite Women's Diaries" by Anne Yoder; and "The Constantinople Mennonite Children's Home, 1921-22" by Stanley Miller.

Bottom left: Rowena Winters Lark (1892-1970), on right, at Dearborn Street Mission, Chicago, February 1946. "We have a sewing with this group on Thursdays... There has been a great spiritual change in this group... Jesus has been very good to us."

Born in Savannah, Georgia, Rowena went to college and graduated with a teaching degree, and taught in the Washington, D.C. school system for 28 years. She married James H. Lark in 1918, and in 1927 they moved from Florida to Quakertown where Rowena started attending the Mennonite Rocky Ridge Mission Church.

Rowena and her husband, James served the Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Virginia, 1936-44; Chicago, Illinois, 1944-56; St. Louis, Missouri, 1956-58; and Fresno, California, 1958-70. Rowena had a powerful pioneer spirit, ... and stressed educational, community, and most important, spiritual values.

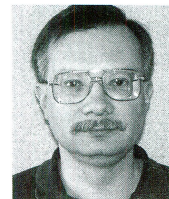
Sources: Rowena (Winters) and James Lark Photograph Collection; Rowena's letter to Fannie Yoder Swartzendruber, Easter 1946; "The Larks: Mission Workers", by Hubert Brown; and "A Mother's Love" by Linda Lyons (granddaughter). (Photo by James H. Lark.)





# Scrapbook page, North Newton

By John D. Thiesen, Archivist



It might seem that religious orders and Mennonites don't belong together, but from 1908-1958, sixty-six Mennonite women were ordained as deaconesses and served in various Mennonite health institutions. The deaconess movement was inspired by similar groups among German and German-American Lutherans. The movement offered life patterns for single women outside of traditional homemaking. The largest deaconess group resided at Bethel Deaconess Hospital in Newton, Kansas, and was headed by Sister Frieda Kaufman, one of the first three deaconesses ordained in 1908. The last deaconess, Sister Esther Schmidt, died in June 1998.

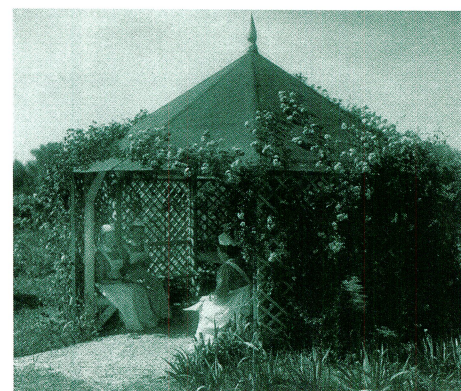
Below: *Deaconesses on vacation in Colorado; left to right, Sister Elfrieda Sprunger, Sister Rose Jantzen, Sister Dora Richert, Sister Anuta Dirks. These four were ordained as deaconesses June 2, 1918.*



Below: *Sister Catherine Voth (left) and Sister Hillegonda van der Smitten in the Bethel Deaconess Home, before 1926. Sister Catherine is reading the Newton newspaper, the Evening Kansan-Republican. Note also the portrait of Bernhard Warkentin at upper right. Wilhelmina Warkentin, wife of Bernhard, was a major supporter of the hospital and the deaconesses.*



*Sister Frieda Kaufman sitting and reading by Christmas tree, probably in the Sisters' Home, Dec. 1942.*



*Sister Frieda Kaufman (at right) and two unidentified deaconesses in the "Rosenhaus" [Rose House] located where the Sisters' Home was later built on the Bethel Deaconess Hospital grounds, ca. 1915?*





## Women's stories: balancing our collective memory

Women have always served the church in significant ways—sometimes recognized in “set-apart” ministries and other times in less public roles.

From an era when women's gifts of public ministry were not recognized, stories are told such as this one: Annie Gross of Doylestown, Pa., hosted a Lancaster Conference minister who had just preached the Sunday sermon on women keeping silent. At the dinner table the preacher asked his hostess a question. In response, “She sat up erect, with hands folded, head high, and lips pinched tightly. Laughing, the visiting preacher confessed, ‘Annie you are whipping me with my own stick’” (John L. Ruth, *Maintaining the Right Fellowship*, 1984, 434).

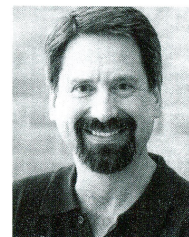
Among those who served in recognized roles of ministry were deaconesses. Elisabeth Dirks, who died a martyr's death in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands, served in the apostolic office of deaconess. The General Conference recognized and commissioned 66 deaconesses between 1900 and 1958, as featured on page 15. The 1632 *Dordrecht Confession* recognizes the ministry of these servants who were to be ordained to “visit, comfort, and care for the poor, feeble, sick, sorrowing and needy, and

also the widows and orphans, and assist in attending to other wants and necessities of the church to the best of their ability” (<http://www.mcusa-archives.org/library/resolutions/dordrecht/dordrecht-9.html>).

In referring to the imbalance of women in written histories, Linda Huber Hecht has written that Anabaptist women “deserve a place in the collective memory of human society.” Their stories enrich all of us. “Making visible the lives of women from the past benefits us all by bringing needed balance to the historical memory of humanity” (*Profiles of Anabaptist Women*, Wilfred Laurier, University Press, 1996, p. 1).

Linda Christophel, in the lead article of this issue, “makes visible” the lives of contemporary women of color. Using the analogy of midwives, she writes of the role she and Pat McFarlane played in shaping the stories of 51 women into video and book form. “As midwives to those words and to this particular oral history project we feel humbled. As we help birth the larger story, the church can only benefit from the gift that each woman has given as she allowed her story to be shared.”

—John Sharp



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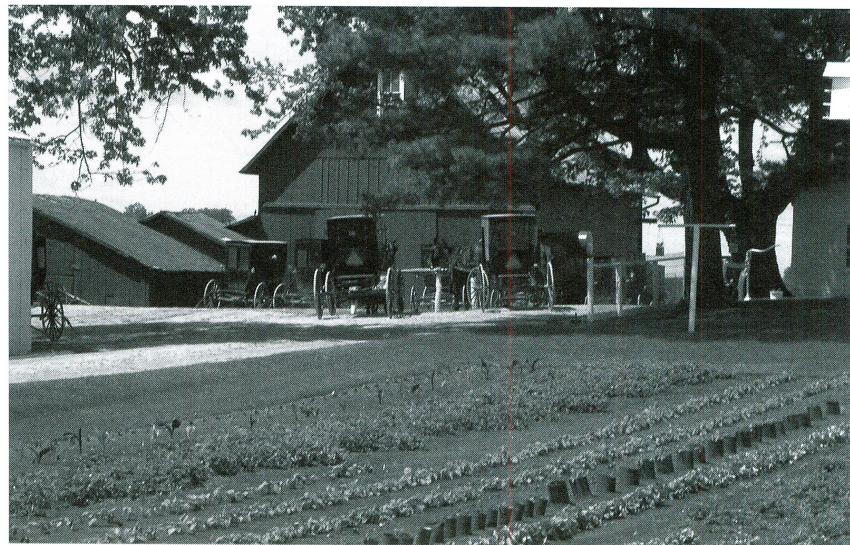
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# Mennonite Historical Bulletin

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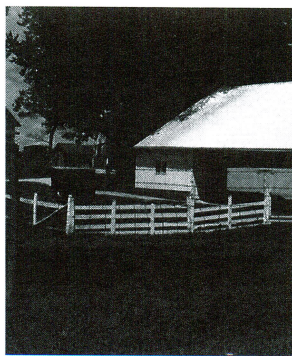
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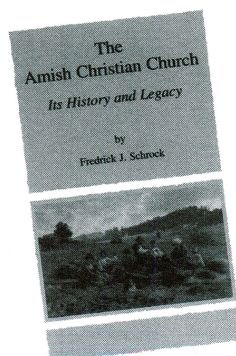
## In this issue



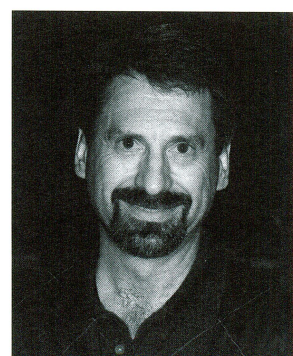
**Page 3:** John K. Yoder, the prominent bishop of the Oak Grove Amish Mennonite Church of Wayne County, Ohio, should also be recognized as the founding father of the Amish Mennonite denomination. So writes Paton Yoder, the "dean" of Amish Mennonite scholarship. With his prescient grasp of the complex issues which resulted in the separation of change-minded and tradition-minded Amish in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Paton Yoder summarizes John K. Yoder's formative influence.



**Page 10:** Marilyn Lehman writes reflectively and poetically about attending her Amish cousin's wedding and "the extraordinary way a common barn and modest shed had been transformed into temple and banquet all." Reflecting on the richness of tradition, Lehman finds "beauty in the poetry of its rhythms, a poetry evoked by the repetition of rituals that enrich the present with images from the past, that remind us of our relationship to God and to each other."



**Page 13:** Dale Shenk reviews *The Amish Christian Church: Its History and Legacy* by Frederick J. Schrock. The church began in Adams County, Indiana in 1893-94 when David Schwartz broke with his father, bishop Joseph Schwartz. After a series of transformations, a remnant of this group continues in Kentucky.



**Page 16:** "Jedes Ende ist schwer. I have finished my decade as editor of this paper and as director of the Historical Committee and Archives," writes John Sharp in his farewell editorial.

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Dates of some important events of the A.M. Church  
of Wayne Co Ohio. Gathered from the Diary of  
C.Z. Yoder. By J.S. Gerig Dec 26<sup>th</sup> 1927

1862 In October. The first service was held in the  
first church building erected by this congregation  
(Called formerly Center of Green Church) Now  
the Oak Grove congregation.

## John K. Yoder (1824-1906), principal participant in the founding of the Amish Mennonite Church

by Paton Yoder

*Above: Dates of some  
important events of the A.M.  
church of Wayne Co., Ohio.*

Gathered from the Diary of C.Z. Yoder by  
J.S. Gerig, Dec. 26<sup>th</sup> 1927.

John K. Yoder is known especially as long-time bishop (1859-1904) of the Oak Grove Amish Mennonite Church. Secondarily, he is remembered as a leader of the entire Amish Mennonite denomination as it gradually deviated from the centuries-old Amish denomination during the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Mennonite historians have given attention to segments of the story of his leadership in that church. What is lacking is a cohesive account of his emergence and continuing leadership in that denomination throughout his public ministry.<sup>1</sup> Surely Bishop John K. Yoder was as much the “father” of the Amish Mennonites as were his contemporaries, Joseph Stuckey, the “father” of the Stuckey churches in central Illinois, and Henry Egli, the leader of what became the Evangelical Mennonite Church.

There is a personal reason for the writer’s interest in Bishop John K. Yoder. Three generations of my forebears—my great-grandparents (Samuel and Catherine Yoder), my grandparents (Jonathan and Leah Yoder), and my father (Silvanus Yoder)—lived a part or all of their adult years as active lay persons under the churchly jurisdiction of Bishop Yoder. Great-grandfather Samuel was a liberal contributor to the building of Oak Grove’s first meetinghouse, built in 1862, clearly a project undertaken with young Bishop Yoder’s encouragement.<sup>2</sup> Moving ahead to the next generation and to the congregational crisis of 1889-90, Grandfather Jonathan Yoder was an active layman during that crisis, and his sister Barbara was married to David Hostetler, the leading dissident in that crisis. Further, Jonathan’s brother, Jacob N. Yoder, was married to Mary Yoder, the bishop’s own daughter. Finally, my own father, Silvanus Yoder, was 17 years old at the time of this crisis and was one of the 42 converts resulting from that first-ever series of evangelistic services in 1890, conducted immediately following that crisis. According to Silvanus, Jonathan himself was a staunch supporter of the bishop as the constituted ecclesiastical authority and spoke quite harshly about the dissidents, including his own relatives, although he himself was not very conservative.



## Genealogical roots, childhood, and youth

John K. Yoder was born on January 21, 1824, in Mifflin County, Pennsylvania. He was the son of John Yoder (1785-1855) and Mary King (1790-1866). Only days before he turned 21 (January 9, 1845) he married Lydia Zook. On May 16, 1850, at age 26, he was ordained a minister (evidently as *Diener zum Buch*) in the Upper (Amish) District of the Kishacoquillas Valley.<sup>3</sup> Abraham Peachey, who had bishop oversight of this district, was quite conservative in this mid-century period when many Amish ministers wanted to make a few changes in their church's rules and regulations. Peachey's conservative stance at that time becomes evident only in the fact that in 1862, seven years after John K. moved to Ohio, Peachey broke with Solomon K. Beiler, his more change-minded fellow bishop in the adjoining Middle District.

In 1855 John K. moved to Wayne County, Ohio,<sup>4</sup> and was received into the fellowship of the Wayne County Amish congregation (later renamed Oak Grove), carrying his office as minister with him. This was the year in which his father died, possibly facilitating his departure from the land of his birth. And knowing that he was, or at least

soon would be, rather change-minded, one might speculate that he left the Kishacoquillas Valley to escape the jurisdiction of the tradition-minded Bishop Peachey.

At the time when John K. was received into the Wayne County congregation, it was in some disarray and held in considerable disrespect by neighboring congregations because of the antics of its renegade bishop, Jacob D. Yoder. By the mid 1850s this bishop's own congregation turned against him and removed him from his office, an unusual procedure. Then in 1859 this troubled Wayne County congregation turned, presumably by use of the lot, to the youthful and recently arrived minister from Pennsylvania, John K. Yoder, to replace the disgraced Jacob D. Yoder.<sup>5</sup> Bishop Yoder's tenure would be much longer than that of his predecessor. He would serve as bishop until 1904, at which time paralysis would disqualify him from further active duty.

The Wayne County congregation's removal of Jacob D. Yoder from office was not because the congregation disapproved of the changes which he was proposing. Its members, along with the new bishop, John K. Yoder, were quite prepared to make some changes in the *Ordnung* and were ready to facilitate such by calling a meeting of the ministers, a *Diener Versammlung*, of the entire Amish church to propose such.

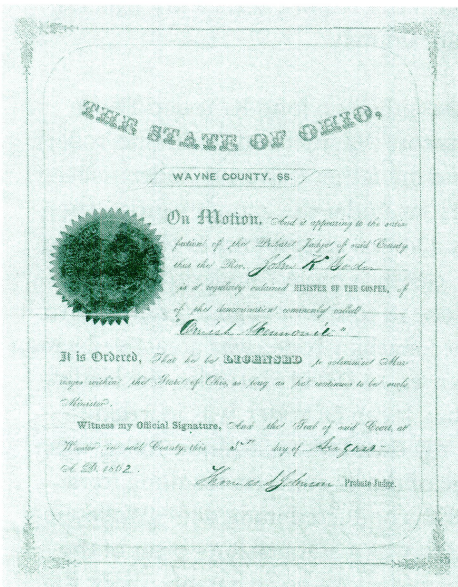
The idea of an assembly of ministers of denomination-wide dimensions was foreign to time-honored Amish congregational polity. But even the more traditionalist ministers had thought of calling such a churchwide ministers' meeting, hoping that such meeting would rule against changes in the *Ordnung*. In 1851 one of their spokesmen, Bishop David Beiler of the Upper Pequea congregation in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, had written to his fellow bishop, Moses P. Miller, in Holmes County, Ohio, that he "had often thought that a churchwide

ministers' meeting would be very necessary,"<sup>6</sup> presumably by ruling against the innovations which were creeping into the Amish church. But a churchwide ministers' meeting was an innovation in itself, and the idea got little immediate support.

## Bishop John K. Yoder's role as the informal, but very visible, leader of the annual *Diener Versammlungen* of 1862-78

By the early 1860s there was a change in the climate of the Amish church. The change-minded ministers felt their time had come. They were confident enough to take the initiative in planning and calling such a churchwide ministers' meeting. In 1862 some of these change-minded bishops and ministers, working together as a self-appointed group, took the initiative in calling for an assembly of all the ministers in the Amish church in America. They may have sensed, or hoped, that the majority of ministers attending such assembly would be of the change-minded party. In that first meeting they were accused of failing (deliberately) to involve some congregations in the planning thereof.<sup>7</sup> The accusation was probably not without some substance.

That young Bishop John K. Yoder was a central figure both in planning for, and hosting of, those 16 *Diener Versammlungen* is clear. It seems that bishops Solomon Beiler and John Esch from central Pennsylvania had chanced to come through Wayne County, Ohio, on their return from some boundary-keeping duties in the churches in Butler County, Ohio. Here in Wayne County they evidently huddled with the Wayne County ministers (with John K. Yoder as bishop) and came to propose just such a ministers meeting as had been in the conversations of both the change-minded and the tradition-oriented bishops for some years. There was to be no delay.<sup>8</sup> Bishop John K. Yoder's Wayne County congregation would host the first conference (June 1862) and did so. Ten ordained men from this home congregation would be in attendance.<sup>9</sup>



Ohio ministerial license of John K. Yoder issued August 5, 1862. John K. Yoder Collection



In view of what transpired in the Amish denomination following that first assembly of ministers in 1862, one might say, with reason, that Bishop Yoder and those who accepted his leadership were opening Pandora's box. In the course of those following 70 years the standing principle of a stable and largely unchanging *Ordnung* was considerably weakened. But these men did not have that kind of ingenious foresight. One need not have any considerable insight to conclude that they thought that their new model of the *Ordnung* would stand the test of many generations, as had the old model which they were discarding. One can scarcely fault them for such assumptions.

John K.'s role continued unabated in the 16 annual ministers meetings that followed (1862-1878). His leadership can scarcely be exaggerated. He, along with bishops Samuel Yoder of Mifflin County, Pennsylvania, and John P. King of Logan County, Ohio, soon came to serve as an informal triumvirate for these meetings. He attended 14 of these meetings and served as moderator of the conferences of 1864, 1868, 1874, and 1878, and as assistant moderator for the conferences of 1866 and 1870. He frequently preached "powerful" sermons to the assembled ministers.

In his near domination of the *Diener Versammlungen*, Bishop Yoder surely placed his imprint on that continuing body which met yearly from 1862 to 1878. Already in the third *Versammlung*, that of 1864, he pressed the tradition-minded ministers to state their case to the assembled ministers, which they did. But the position paper that they drew up was in actuality a sort of ultimatum, which the change-minded majority evidently rejected. Bishop John K. Yoder had had his way. The change-minded would control the *Versammlungen* thereafter, but at the cost of the defection of the entire conservative party.<sup>10</sup>

In the years immediately after this departure of the conservatives, there was another defection; or perhaps it was more in the nature of a deflection. Henry Egli was insisting that candidates for baptism have a crisis conversion experience,<sup>11</sup> a position to which the *Diener Versammlungen* had some difficulty in responding. That Egli could never have functioned under the umbrella of John K.'s *Diener Versammlungen*, and that Yoder could never have labored together with Egli, is clear from the correspondence between the two that extended to 1880.<sup>12</sup>

There was a third cleansing of the *Diener Versammlungen* roster in 1872, in which Bishop John K. Yoder was clearly the principal participant. In the course of this cleansing he aggressively attacked Bishop Joseph Stuckey from Illinois for not forthrightly expelling the learned Joseph Yoder from his North Danvers congregation for espousing the doctrine of universalism. The result was the withdrawal of five congregations of Stuckey Amish from the fellowship of the *Diener Versammlungen*.<sup>13</sup>

But the ejection of Stuckey and his associates left some sores. The Indiana ministers were offended by it, and one of them, Bishop Isaac Smucker, attended no more of these yearly meetings. They would remain within the Amish Mennonite fold, but would resist Bishop John K.'s domination of it.

There would be no more major defections from the umbrella of the *Diener Versammlungen*. These ministers, very much under Bishop Yoder's leadership, had met yearly for 17 years, and in the process of defining itself and determining its boundaries had dropped off the more tradition-minded



The Oak Grove Mennonite Church, Smithville, Ohio, as it appeared ca. 1940s. Melvin Gingerich Photograph Collection

Amish ministers, then the perhaps more spiritually discerning Egli Amish, and finally the less doctrinally discerning Stuckey Amish! The Smucker and Troyer bishops would retain their identity as Amish Mennonites, but dangle loosely.

As continuing leader of the change-minded delegates who remained under the *Versammlungen* umbrella, Bishop Yoder would be classified by his colleagues as a moderate. He would allow baptism "in water," but evidently was not change-minded enough concerning this controversial issue of major dimensions to insist on such. With the Wayne County congregation in the midst of building its own meetinghouse during the very days of the meeting of 1862, he most surely found it convenient to defend, as he did, the construction and use of such. With respect to the manufacture and consumption of alcoholic beverages he was change-minded. He would depart from the traditional Amish tolerance of such practices and forbid it.<sup>14</sup> He remained opposed to the taking of portraits and the use of musical instruments; evidently until his death; the old regulations against them must hold. With his fellow delegates he had thus revised the traditional *Ordnung* of the Amish church.

John K.'s leadership in these annual conferences continued to their end in 1878. As moderator in that last



conference he clearly dominated the proceedings. Possibly sensing that both the authority of that conference, which its participants called the *Diener Versammlungen*, and its continuance in future years were in jeopardy, he spoke often, extensively, and urgently, to prevent such from happening. Not only did he assume the continuity of the conferences; he continued to insist on the authority of the same to make rulings (*Beschlüsse*). And he would depart further from Amish congregationalism by inserting “*Distrikt*” conferences between the congregation and the annual “*General Konferenz*.” Even using this latter term in preference to *Diener Versammlungen* suggests in itself that he would be ready to deviate further from the traditional congregational polity of the Amish church.

Of course it did not happen, at least not in the way John K. Yoder had envisaged. The *Diener Versammlungen*, already in disarray in their final years, would never meet again. There would be no general conference or other kind of replacement for the next two decades. One must suppose that John K. was quite discouraged. Clearly he and his associates had presided over the birth and formative years of that denomination which, by the 1880s, came to be called Amish Mennonite.<sup>15</sup> Now that church was without an organizational structure. He must shore up what the *Diener Versammlungen* had produced and find a structure to help it to happen.

In the years immediately following that final ministers meeting of 1878, Bishop John K. Yoder came to be concerned for the continued unity and faithfulness of the Amish Mennonite congregations to the spirit of those *Diener Versammlungen* as expressed in its rulings (*Beschlüsse*) and now practiced, and sometimes departed from, by the participating congregations.

Two documents stand together as sources for determining Bishop John

K.’s continuing spiritual concerns in the years immediately following the demise of the *Diener Versammlungen* of 1862-78. In 1880 he submitted an article entitled “*Wahre Wächter*” (True Watchmen) to the *Herold der Wahrheit*<sup>16</sup> in which he unburdened himself concerning the lapses in the discipline of some unnamed Amish Mennonite ministers. Secondly, there are the minutes of a kind of orphan “*Distrikt Konferenz*” of 1883, held at Bishop Yoder’s home church at Oak Grove. This conference was attended by none other than Bishop Yoder and those other two members of the old triumvirate (John P. King and Samuel Yoder), by other bishops and ministers from Ohio and Pennsylvania, and finally, by one delegate each from Indiana and Michigan.<sup>17</sup> These two documents reflect identical concerns. They are of one cloth. One is drawn to the conclusion that Bishop John K. dominated this orphan conference as he had the *Diener Versammlungen* of 1862-78.

The deviations from the spirit and letter of the *Diener Versammlungen* which John K. lamented included the wearing of “proud clothing,” and participating in “all kinds of worldly entertainment,” such as “Shows” and “Faires.” The other document, that which reported the meeting of an ad hoc eastern district conference, expounded vigorously against the possession and use of musical instruments, which served to promote “godlessness and lasciviousness.” Even ministers, it was asserted, were among those who had such or defended others who possessed them.

These documents indicate that Yoder was greatly concerned about such identified worldly practices and that he felt some legislated uniformity was necessary to strengthen the walls of Zion. When church members go from one offending congregation, where there is “freedom in almost all worldly fashions,”<sup>18</sup> to a conforming congregation, they cause trouble. The solution for this problem was

to assemble repeatedly in persistent determination to come to a unanimity, a process which had resulted in the Dordrecht Confession of Faith in the mid 1600s.

But Bishop Yoder thought this unity required some uniformity. Such synod should be sure to legislate against those infractions which he was even now decrying. The conference of 1883 proposed to require all participating ministers to come into obedience to this proposed newly constructed *Ordnung*. Fellowship with ministers who become lax in administering it should be discontinued.<sup>19</sup> In Amish church practice such withdrawal of fellowship involved the cessation of cooperation in the administration of the Lord’s Supper and in the administration of all other ministerial duties.

Bishop John K. quite evidently had some ministers in mind when he charged that some were sleeping and were not exercising proper discipline against the worldly in their respective congregations. Surely he numbered those Indiana bishops—Isaac Smucker of Topeka, Jonathan Smucker of Nappanee, and Jonas D. Troyer of the Clinton Frame congregation near Goshen—among the “sleeping watchmen.” John K.’s disagreements with these bishops were longstanding. Already in the course of the years of the *Diener Versammlungen* differences had arisen between Isaac Smucker and Jonas D. Troyer on the one hand and John K. Yoder on the other. In the third of these conferences Smucker and Troyer had been reprimanded for advancing a deacon to the office of full deacon too quickly. Troyer in particular had responded a day later in rather bad grace.<sup>20</sup> Later, in that instance in which Joseph Stuckey had been disciplined by the *Versammlung* of 1872, Smucker evidently took serious offence at this treatment of his longstanding friend and ceased attending these yearly ministers meetings. He and the other two Indiana bishops would continue to fellowship



with Stuckey to the end of the century, in spite of the latter's virtual ouster from that ministerial organization.<sup>21</sup>

Now, in the 1880s, other differences were emerging between the Indiana churches and those more supportive of Bishop John K. and more loyal to the legacy of the *Diener Versammlungen*. They would not separate from that infant denomination, the Amish Mennonites, but they would give little support to Bishop Yoder's pronouncements against those innovations which he, Yoder, considered to be worldly.

An unplanned juxtaposition of the Yoder pattern of discipline with that of Bishop Jonathan Smucker in Indiana came to pass when Bishop Jonathan Smucker's son, Menno, from Nappanee, Indiana, took off on one of those youthful treks characteristic of Amish young men in search of employment or a girlfriend, or both. Menno trekked, of all places, to Bishop Yoder's congregation in Wayne County, Ohio. Here he found his girlfriend, but encountered also the displeasure of his girlfriend's bishop, John K. Yoder. In counseling son Menno to conform to Yoder's Oak Grove discipline in a family letter, father Jonathan added to that counsel some comments which reveal that he stood in some considerable disagreement with John K in the latter's assessment of the conditions within the Amish Mennonite denomination. He said he thought

but little of the Proceedings of the Ohio conference last spring . . . , or at least of some of them. . . . Now it seems they [the] eastern preachers have cut us off, or at least [do] not take communion with us; yes, even not preach with us. . . . Time will tell what the result of their conference will be. Yes, it will show for itself.<sup>22</sup>

That Bishop John K. persisted in holding the line against his perceived drift away from the *Diener Versammlungen* version of the *Ordnung* in his own congregation is amply portrayed in Lehman's Oak

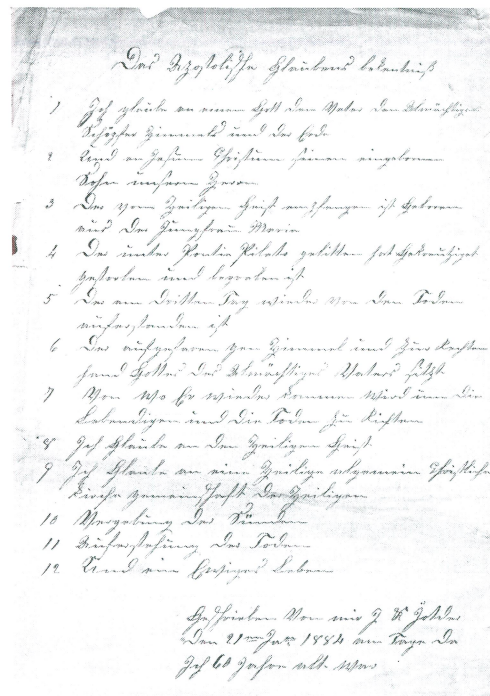
Grove history. His persistence was long unyielding.<sup>23</sup> He would practice what he preached. That he persisted in the administration of the church's *Ordnung* is illustrated by the experience of layman Jonathan Yoder and his wife Mary. It was already in the mid- or late 1880s when Mary made dresses for her stepdaughters from a "new pattern and did not make aprons to go with them, [that] the preacher came to see her."<sup>24</sup> More importantly, judging by the outburst of dissension in his own congregation that erupted in 1889-90, John K. may have sensed, long before said outburst, that his stance was in jeopardy even in his home congregation. But it took the threat of a congregation-wide division to jar him loose from his entrenched position.

#### John K. Yoder and that new denomination, the Amish Mennonite Church

The district conferences that John K. had proposed in the last *Versammlung* (1878) were exasperatingly slow in forming. The triumvirate tried to promote such, but the proverbial mountain labored and brought forth a mouse. In the decade that followed the demise of the *Diener Versammlungen*, only some *ad hoc* district conferences were mustered,<sup>25</sup> including that orphan "Distrikt Konferenz" of 1883 at Oak Grove, Wayne County, Ohio. That all three members of the old triumvirate attended this Wayne County conference (three bishops out of a total of eleven) leads one to suppose that they were instrumental in arranging for its convening, and possibly also in dominating its procedures and findings. But this conference too evidently had no follow-ups.

And John K.'s proposal for a general conference, to be superimposed on the district conferences, seemed likewise not to have taken root. It would require two decades of congregational independence (to which a sprinkling of regional conference authority was being introduced) among the Amish

Mennonites before such would be created, and even then it was not intended that it should have any legislative authority.



"John K. Yoder (he wrote it Johder in German) on his sixtieth birthday ceremonially wrote and signed the apostles' creed." John K. Yoder Collection

#### Bishop John K. Yoder and the crisis of 1889-90 in the Oak Grove congregation

No further evidence is necessary to conclude that Bishop Yoder faced the crisis of 1889-1890 in his congregation carrying the baggage of the *Beschlüsse* of the *Diener Versammlungen* in his hands.<sup>26</sup> The walls of Zion must stand firm. Those walls, consisting of the time-honored *Ordnung* of the Amish as redefined by the rulings of the *Diener Versammlungen* of 1862-78, must not be breached. One can detect a measure of self-identity in the bishop's stance. Were not those walls in some considerable measure the product of his own hands? He was righteously stubborn. In his history of the Oak Grove congregation, James O. Lehman makes it clear that Bishop Yoder was very resistant to the changes which perhaps half of the members of his congregation wanted.<sup>27</sup> According to Lehman, "Bishop John K. Yoder . . . was the symbol of the authoritative old order."



While a 21<sup>st</sup>-century narrator finds it convenient to criticize Bishop Yoder for his intransigence, he should recognize that this crisis in Yoder's congregation occurred in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The bishop was tottering on the brink of that approaching storm of 1889-90, while carrying in his portfolio several centuries of Amish churchly veneration for uniformity in matter of faith and conduct and for the administration of *streng* discipline to maintain such uniformity.

But in spite of the forces of tradition, and rather than face a division that might divide his congregation into two equal parts, Bishop Yoder made some concessions, although interspersed with a number of reaffirmations of traditional practices. Those 16 "decisions," drawn up by the committee appointed to bring about a reconciliation of the several parties to the dispute, reaffirmed some old practices as well as introduced some changes. Thus Bishop Yoder's principal concerns were in considerable part respected. But many of the decisions reflect, even in the way they are stated, a kind of retreating tactic by the bishop and the more conservative members of the congregation. The prohibition against buttons could be discarded, but quite reluctantly. Single men could shave off their beards, but married men should retain theirs. And furthermore, mustaches were to be permitted only if the wearer also wore a beard.<sup>28</sup> Thus a split of major proportions was avoided, although Bishop Yoder's principal antagonist, Minister David Hostetler, had already departed with his supporters and established the Salem congregation.<sup>29</sup>

But those ministers and bishops in this fledgling denomination who had looked to John K. Yoder as the defender of the faith—he who until the eleventh hour had resisted such innovations as protracted evening meetings, the wearing of buttons, worldly fashions, musical instruments, the wearing of

the beard for married men, etc.—felt he had capitulated. Gideon Stoltzfus, bishop of the Millwood Amish Mennonite congregation in eastern Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, remonstrated to John K. for what he considered to be the latter's capitulation. This defender of the faith as held by the participants in the old *Diener Versammlungen* had defected. John K.'s response to Stoltzfus was defensive: he had been outmaneuvered. Taken at its face value, this letter suggests that Bishop Yoder, even two years after his compromise with the change-minded of his congregation, begrudged the concessions he had felt forced to make.<sup>30</sup> Bishop J. C. Kanagy, of Cass County, Missouri, was equally disquieted with what he considered to be John K.'s capitulation. In a letter, evidently to the above named Gideon Stoltzfus, he lashed out against Yoder. Said he,

I fear the church has seen its best times. . . . Like the church in Wayne County, Ohio, J. K. Yoder has been leaning toward the ring in Elkhart, Ind. They would run the United States and Canada if they could.<sup>31</sup>

In making those above-mentioned concessions to the proponents of change in the crisis of 1889-90 at Oak Grove, John K. had prevented a congregational division, but he seems to have **lost** the respect of the conservative wing of the Amish Mennonite church. Would he **gain** the respect of new generation?

An aside is required here, for Bishop Yoder, with his wife of two years, Jemima Zook, made a trip to the Amish Mennonite churches of central Illinois in November 1889, in the very midst of that crisis in his home congregation. Surely this conduct requires some explanation. At that time the Oak Grove congregation, and as certainly, John K. himself, was preoccupied with the crisis at hand. The 16 "decisions" constituting the outcome of the controversy would be announced in less

than two months. But at this crucial moment the bishop of the congregation (and the central figure in the crisis) took off for McLean County, Illinois.<sup>32</sup>

Not only did John K. slip away from his congregation in the midst of a crisis. On arriving in Illinois he added another surprise to his unusual conduct. He resumed, perhaps only momentarily, fellowship with that lax disciplinarian, Joseph Stuckey, with whom he (Yoder) had summarily broken fellowship and who had been virtually expelled from the *Diener Versammlungen* in 1872. On the Sunday morning of that visit, November 21, 1889, Bishop Yoder preached the conventional Sunday morning sermon at Stuckey's North Danvers church. Stuckey seemed to revel in Yoder's participation in his (Stuckey's) Sunday morning church service. He reported Yoder's presence and participation in that service to the *Herald of Truth*, adding that "it afforded us all much pleasure to see and hear the brother."<sup>33</sup> That John K. preached in Stuckey's church, the bishop whom he had been instrumental in ousting from the *Diener Versammlungen* in 1872, is most puzzling. Surely he understood Amish church polity clearly enough to realize that in preaching in Stuckey's church he was publicly reversing the position which he had taken in 1872. Why this bishop, still an Amishman in many ways, chose to depart thus from Amish ecclesiastical tradition remains a mystery. It stretches one's imagination, but perhaps his renewing of fellowship with Stuckey was an expression of his acceptance of the order of things in the new Amish Mennonite church.

But as to the second question, why John K. left his congregation in the midst of a congregational crisis, there is now a likely answer. By assembling the pieces of this puzzle one is drawn toward the conclusion that this long-time advocate of district conferences for the Amish Mennonite church evidently chose to go to Illinois to participate in the planning for the organization



of the Western District Conference as an ongoing organization. One can easily be drawn to the conclusion that this experienced conference leader and longtime advocate of district conferences felt constrained to participate in the organizing of one such, even though he was currently involved in a solemn crisis back at Oak Grove. Given such circumstance, his traveling to Illinois, even in the midst of a crisis in his home church, allows for a measure of indulgence.

### Bishop John K. Yoder after the crisis of 1889-90

Clearly the conservative element of the Amish Mennonite church had rejected John K.'s leadership in the denomination following the crisis of 1889-90 in his own congregation. It remained to be seen whether the new mix, composed of the moderates and the more change-minded, would pick him up, respect his ancient role as the principal founder of the Amish Mennonites, and then proceed to accept his participation in the ongoing church affairs of the denomination. It appears they accepted this new John K. Yoder with considerable veneration, but allotted him only a spotty leadership role in new order of things, and that possibly reluctantly. His call for district conferences, which had lain dormant throughout most of the 1880s, finally came to be realized late in that decade and early in the 1890s. (For much of the preceding intervening period Amish Mennonite congregations found it possible to continue to cooperate with each other through that centuries-old device of ad hoc local or regional ministers meetings which assembled as circumstances seemed to demand.<sup>34</sup> But some of such conferences may have been abortive attempts to put into practice Bishop Yoder's call at that last *Diener Versammlung* for a denomination-wide system of continuing or self-perpetuating district conferences. Such was probably the case with that orphan "Distrikt" conference of 1883 held at

Bishop Yoder's own Oak Grove church, identified above.


Eventually, however, Bishop Yoder's dream for a system of continuing or self-perpetuating district conferences would slowly come to life. The central district (the Indiana-Michigan Amish Mennonite Conference) was the first to organize,<sup>35</sup> and a western conference came to life in 1890.<sup>36</sup> Lastly, the congregations of Bishop Yoder's own region set up a continuing conference in 1893, the Ohio and Eastern Amish Mennonite Conference.<sup>37</sup>

As indicated above, it appears that Bishop Yoder participated in the planning for the above identified western conference in his trip to Illinois in the fall of 1889. What is more certain is that in 1891 he attended the second annual meeting of that conference and served as its moderator.<sup>38</sup> He probably had missed the first yearly conference of that Western District because he had been in Illinois only months earlier to participate in planning for it.

But it seems that his role in this modernizing Amish Mennonite denomination was more often that of a founding father rather than of an active leader. Even when those district conferences began to function it seems that they largely passed him by, as evidenced by the proceedings of the eastern conference for his own region. At its first annual meeting this advocate of conferences was shunted aside by his younger associates. Perhaps he was prepared mentally to become the elder statesman of the Amish Mennonites. But one must suppose that when, at that first meeting of the Ohio and Eastern Amish Mennonite Conference, visiting Bishop Jonathan P. Smucker from the Indiana-Michigan sister conference was chosen as moderator<sup>39</sup> (a choice that was repeated by the fourth yearly meeting of the conference), he must have had some mixed emotions. In the previous decades he and this Indiana bishop

had been at considerable odds with each other. Nevertheless, John K. never wavered in his acceptance of the revision of his own revised *Ordnung* and in his cooperation with those who devised it.

In any case, the above-described denomination would be short-lived. Early in the twentieth century the district conferences of the Amish Mennonites would unite with the Old Mennonite district conferences in their respective areas and consign themselves to oblivion by dropping the word **Amish** from the names of the new district unions. What happened at the Clinton Frame Amish Mennonite church at the time of the union may be symbolic for the entire Amish Mennonite denomination. There a self-appointed former trustee seized the moment and, only days after the union went into effect, painted out the word **Amish** as it had appeared above the front doors of the church!

One could peer into the twentieth century even further, and take note that the long-time muffled dissonance of those liberal Indiana bishops would carry over into the newly organized—as of 1916—Old Mennonite church conference of Indiana and Michigan. Jonas Troyer's congregation (Clinton Frame) had already gone through a division in 1892, and the congregations of the two Smucker bishops (at Topeka and Nappanee) would each experience a major division in the course of that 1923 crisis in the Indiana-Michigan conference. 



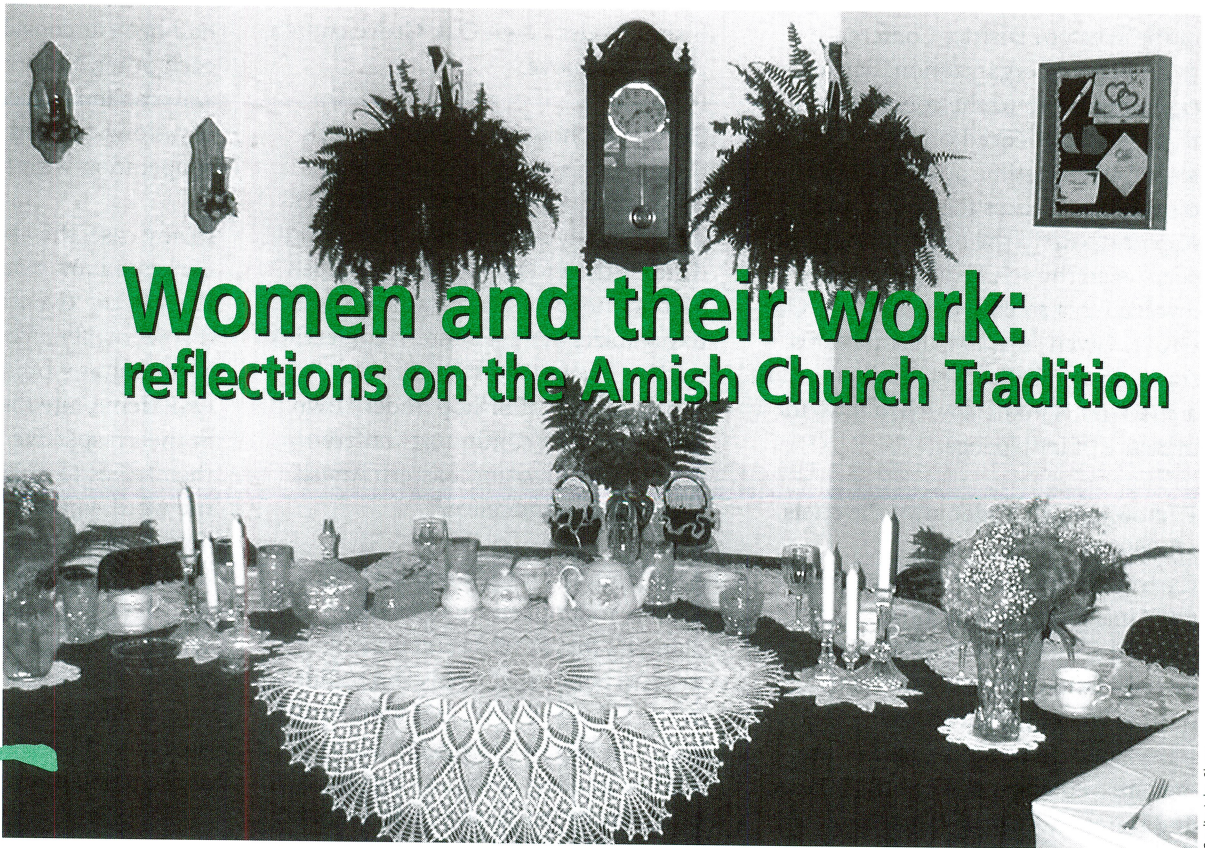
Paton Yoder, Goshen, Ind., known for his work on Amish and Amish Mennonites, has most recently produced

*Proceedings of the Amish Ministers' Meetings, 1862-1878, with Steven R. Estes* (Mennonite Historical Society, 1999).

**Endnotes** continued on page 14 ...



## Women and their work: reflections on the Amish Church Tradition



Credit: John Sharp

by Marilyn Lehman

Some years ago I was visiting Amish relatives in another state as they were making preparations for a *Hochzeit* (wedding). On the day before the wedding, my uncle, the bride's father, showed my aunts and me the arrangements they had made for the ceremony and festivities to follow. The wedding dinner and evening singing were to be held in a new shed, where eight ovens were lined up against one wall and rows of tables were set with fine china and crystal, covered with clear plastic to protect them from the dust and flies of the farm. The church ceremony was to be held in the barn, which had been cleared of cows and newly whitewashed. I was shocked! The thought of holding so sacred a ceremony in the profane space of the cow barn struck me as, well, as unseemly. My aunts were otherwise affected. "Yes," one of them commented, "sometimes when I go out to do the chores, I think, this is where Mary [her daughter] got married."

The next day, I attended the wedding. Sitting next to my grandmother, listening to the unhurried rising and falling tones, the almost plaintive sound distinctive of Amish congregational singing, I was aware of a gradual shift in my consciousness, from the restlessness of everyday cares and concerns to a deeply meditative state of receptivity. By the time the preaching began, I was ready to accept the gratitude for the abundance of life the preacher invited me to consider. As the rituals of preaching, praying, and reading scripture progressed, the cows, glimpsed through the open window calmly chewing their cud, no longer seemed inappropriate as ornamentation for the sacramental performance of the marriage ceremony. On the contrary, they brought to mind the conditions attending the birth of Jesus, in a stable surrounded by domestic animals. Nor did the festivities following the ceremony suffer from being held in a shed rather than the more dignified fellowship hall or country club reception hall one expects on such occasions.

My non-Amish tablemates, discussing the curious customs of their Amish neighbors over dinner (a lavish midday affair), thought that a lot of work could have been saved by using paper plates. One man knowingly informed us that the young couples serving as table waiters would have to return the following day to wash all those dishes. I don't know if he noticed how quickly those china plates and cut glass water goblets were washed up afterwards by the women, or how swiftly the tables were reset with the same china and crystal for the next seating of guests—after which they were washed up again for



the evening meal (then washed one last time after the lighter evening meal). My tablemates apparently had not noticed what struck me as deeply profound: the extraordinary way a common barn and modest shed had been transformed into temple and banquet hall. And somehow the china seemed as essential to that transformation as the ceremonial religious rites.

I was reminded of this experience last summer on a visit to northern Indiana. As I once again sat on a backless bench in an open shed enjoying the exquisite beauty of Amish church singing, letting it draw me into the tranquil space of meditative surrender, I wondered again at the miracle that had transformed what a week earlier had been an ordinary shed into a house of worship. History informs us that the Amish practice of holding church services in members' homes is based not on ideology or theology, but tradition. Its roots can be found in the seventeenth century, when imprisonment and execution had suppressed the radical Anabaptist movement to the extent that those who survived did so by becoming *Die Stillen im Lande* ("The Quiet in the Land"), when territorial princes in many places allowed Anabaptists to settle on their lands on the condition that they not proselytize their neighbors, hold public worship services or build churches.<sup>2</sup> Reflecting on a practice born out of forced circumstance long out of date, I am surprised by the profoundly poetic and ideologically sound currency of the Amish church tradition. I am neither theologian nor historian. As a student of literature, a Mennonite with Amish roots, I speak from a

Sixty-six times have these eyes  
beheld the changing scenes  
of Autumn.  
I have said enough about moonlight,  
Ask me no more.  
Only listen to the voices of pines  
and cedars, when no wind stirs.  
*Ryo-Nen (Her Last Composition)*<sup>1</sup>

literary perspective—a perspective informed by personal experience of Amish church and culture as well as study of Amish texts. I am interested, then, in the poetics of the Amish way of doing church, in the rhythms of time and space, in the perpetuation of time-honored religious liturgy, and in the relationships between tradition and its practical implications for the preservation of culture and community.

The following entries from an Amish woman's diary offer a glimpse into the practical components of the practice of worshipping in people's homes:

\$8.84 cream check. Tue January 11  
76 eggs  
was windy. *rist* for wedding. Mrs.  
J.T.B Mrs Enos Mullet Jakie Ida Ola  
Andys Mary Sister Susan Lydiann  
was here. made strawB. pie Cherries.  
Made 10 loafs B. butchered 17  
roaster's. Made 3 Jelly Cakes

Wed January 12 72 [eggs]  
was *dreab*. was all day *dreab*. *rist*  
for wedding. Sam Katie Mr's P.D.B.  
Dans Polly Y. Betsie. Katie Coblenz  
was here to help. Snowed and  
blowed nearly all night.

Wed February 9 54 [eggs]  
was cold I fixed my *yock* and  
*stickered* quilt Polly was at L.S.  
Keims<sup>3</sup> helpt *rist* for *gma*.

Thur. February 24 1.24 [eggs]  
was nice till after noon than was  
windy and and dusty. *we rist* for  
*gma* - Annie M. was here Betsie  
Dan's Katie was here *rubed* dishes  
- scrubed up stair's

*rist* – prepare; *dreab* – dreary (cloudy);  
*yock* – yoke; *stickered* – pieced; *gma*  
– church; *rubed* – rubbed (polished)

The coming together of women to clean and cook in preparation for religious ritual, whether of regular Sunday worship or the wedding church, as these entries indicate, stands behind the transformation of space from ordinary

to ceremonial. And the diary cited, though written in 1927, is as current as the conversations I overheard this past summer at quiltings and other gatherings of Amish women. Both attest to the unfailing support Amish women give each other in the work of making church and community. When a woman is preparing to host a church service, whether regular worship or wedding service, mother, daughters, sisters, aunts and neighbors show up, without invitation or announcement, to help clean and, in the case of the wedding, cook.

The entries reprinted here are representative of the Amish women's diaries I have studied (ranging from 1927 to 1998) in terms both of detail given and detail omitted. Of significance here is the naming of women (relatives and neighbors) and the listing of work (cleaning and cooking). The term "*rist* for *gma*"—literally "prepare for church"—covers the range of cleaning customarily required for hosting church, from yard work to washing down walls and cleaning out cupboards and closets. (It is worth noting that, other than naming the women and work performed, only the weather receives mention in the diary entries.) In her 1988 essay, "Midwestern Diaries and Journals: What Women Were (Not) Saying in the Late 1800s," Suzanne Bunkers observes that Midwestern women validated themselves as individuals in the daily recording of work in their diaries, and, further, that they validated themselves as members of communities in writing about relationships.<sup>4</sup> Written without commentary, introspection, or emotion—in a remarkably uniform, almost formulaic style—the diaries of Amish women reflect a similar fashioning of self through work and relationship.

The interaction of these values, work and community, come together in the Amish ritual preparation for religious liturgy. And the work that is done collectively is, I would suggest, as vital to the creation and maintenance of






Credit: John Sharp

community as it is to the preparation of space for ceremony. Though grounded in the objective realm of physical work, Amish women “risting for gma,” then, are not just preparing a specific place for a specific ceremony, they are also engaging in the broader communal effort of building relationships—in a way that is perhaps functionally similar to the effort of intentional groups in our Mennonite churches, women’s fellowships and small groups (with the difference that intentional groups tend to work in the intellectual realm, sharing ideas rather than physical activity). Although the work of creating and/or maintaining community would for Amish women appear to be secondary to the physical chores of washing and sweeping, it is perhaps no less effective in honoring women as valued members of the community.

I am suggesting, then, that it is in the interrelationship of women, work and community that the transformation from secular to sacred is made possible in the Amish tradition. In a sense, the women’s collective work comes before, and stands behind, the ceremonial space that is inhabited by the congregation on Sunday mornings, that makes habitable for worship the space set aside for this purpose. As ritual cleansing in many religious traditions prepares the worshipper to partake of ritual sacrament, so Amish women “risting for gma” consecrate ordinary space, set it apart for a time (for it will be returned to ordinary use in the days and weeks to follow) for sacred use.

As I reflect on what effect setting apart ordinary space for a time might have afterward, when it has been returned to everyday use, I remember the barn in which my young cousin sealed her marriage vows. The common shed, I suspect, will always be that place in which that memorable (or not so memorable, as the case may be) sermon was heard. It is unlikely that common everyday spaces that have been touched, however briefly, by the awe of ceremony, can return to their mundane uses without some vestiges of the ceremonial, some aura of the sacred, clinging to their humble bearings. By the same token, I suspect that the cows glimpsed through the open barn door, the rain on the shed’s tin roof drowning out the preacher’s words, these earthy phenomenon ground the worshipper in the earthiness and unpredictability of the here and now even as s/he acknowledges the divine. In this way, the permeable line between secular and sacred may be seen to enrich both realms.

Finally, I return to the quote at the beginning of this essay and suggest that Amish religious ritual reflects and reinforces the cyclical (as opposed to the progressive) nature of Amish culture. Like the daily, monthly, and yearly cycles of life, as the daily recording of weather in their diaries attests, the Amish lifestyle is based on repetition rather than urgency toward betterment. In speaking of Sabbath, Wayne Muller notes that, “The perfection is in the repetition, the sheer ordinariness, the intimate familiarity of a place known because we have visited it again and again, in so many different moments.”<sup>5</sup> His words aptly describe the Amish liturgical tradition (in which the second song of every church service is the *Lob Lied*<sup>6</sup> and the text for the wedding sermon does not vary). Liturgy “ensnared by progress,” Muller continues, replaces the mystical, meditative rhythms of ritual with “responsibility and obligation” as churches attempt to “make this

year’s Christmas pageant better, more dramatic, more impressive, more spectacular than the last.”<sup>7</sup> I do not mean, in referencing Muller’s comparison, to criticize other ways of doing church; I do so only as a way of valorizing the Amish tradition, and perhaps challenging the way “traditional” often gets dismissed as “out-of-date.” My experience of Amish church has taught me that tradition can be deeply meaningful. Its beauty lies in the poetry of its rhythms, a poetry evoked by the repetition of rituals that enrich the present with images from the past, that remind us of our relationship to God and to each other. As I sing the *Lob Lied* on any given Sunday, I know that across the land, wherever two or three Amish people are gathered together, they too are singing this hymn. 



M.G. Moore

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### (Endnotes)

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Wayne Muller, *Sabbath: Find Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives* (New York: Bantam Books, 1999), 88.

<sup>2</sup> Harold S. Bender and Myron S. Augsburger, “Evangelism,” *Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* (Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, 1989). Retrieved 21 Jul 2005

<sup>3</sup> “L. S. Keims” refers to neighbor, Leander Keim and family. Leander S. Keim was ordained minister in 1889. In 1931, four years after this diary was written, he became bishop of the district to which the author belonged. See D. Miller, ed., *Kansas—Oklahoma Amish Directory 2000* (Millersburg, Ohio: Abana Books, 1000), 47.

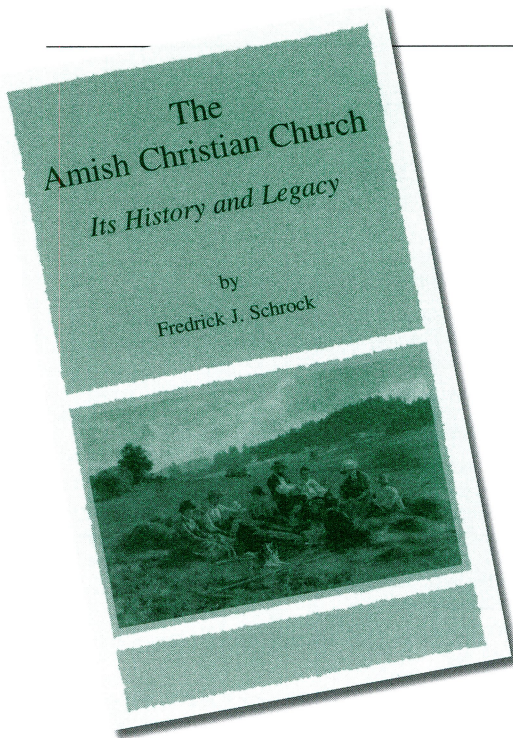
<sup>4</sup> Suzanne L. Bunkers, “Midwestern Diaries and Journals: What Women Were (Not) Saying in the Late 1800s,” in *Studies in Autobiography*, ed. James Olney (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 195–98.

<sup>5</sup> Muller, 89.

<sup>6</sup> *Ausbund*, 770.

<sup>7</sup> Muller, 90.





## ***The Amish Christian Church: Its History and Legacy***

by Frederick J. Schrock

(Altamont, Tenn.: Ambassador Publishers, 2001)

The story of the church is full of moments when sincere Christians found themselves unable to continue to worship together due to differences of faith and practice. The ensuing divisions have occurred on an international scale such as the Protestant, on the denominational scale with the Anabaptists in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Amish a century and a half later, and the General Conference movement in the mid-1800s. However, in much less familiar instances this same impulse has given birth to small congregations at a local level. The Amish Christian Church is one such moment in Anabaptist history, and the book *The Amish Christian Church: Its History and Legacy* by Frederick J. Schrock is a frank but sympathetic telling of this story.

The Amish Christian Church began in southern Indiana in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The group existed as a separate body of believers under two different names for about 50 years. However, persons who count this group as their spiritual ancestors continue

to participate in similar groups to the present day.

The movement begins on the eastern edge of Indiana in Adams County, near the town of (Berne) in 1893-94. At this point the Amish community was a little over 40 years old, having been founded about 1850. Joseph Schwartz was the bishop, and his son David was ordained as a "full deacon." It is this relationship that becomes the primary context for the birth of a new congregation.

The reasons for the division seem too familiar to scholars of Anabaptist history. We continue to pay careful attention to the places where the borders of our communities touch the world. Specifically, lifestyle decisions regarding clothing and homes are viewed as places to demonstrate our faith. In addition, we are also careful to avoid activities that may lead to sin. An additional dynamic in the Amish community is the historic practice of the ban or shunning. Many times, specific issues of sin and the decision to bring discipline on the members become the background for a debate in the congregation about the role of leadership and the nature of authority. An underlying and often unnamed theme is the understanding of grace.

In this particular instance it appears that all of these factors were at work. Following a series of confrontations, David Schwartz and a group of families left to form what they called the Amish Christian Church. This group maintained a distinct identity for about 40 years. During this time their lives revolved around a rural primarily agricultural life, with the simple homes and patterns of many Amish and Mennonites of that era. Stories of their lives are scattered through several chapters of this volume.

However, for some members of the congregation the 1920s were a time of shifting commitments. This trend and some other dynamics, which remain

unclear, resulted in a congregational decision in 1932 to ban David Schwartz, the founder of the group. After some time of confusion among the leaders, the majority of the group formed the Reformed Amish Christian Church (RACC). This group continued in that same community for 15 years. Then in 1947 they moved to Tennessee, remaining for 5 years. During these years they lived a lifestyle that was more progressive than the typical Amish patterns, but remained committed to maintain a separate community.

In 1952, after a series of letters with a church of similar perspectives, the group moved to north central Pennsylvania, joining the Hoover Mennonite church there. Since the Hoover group held to a more conservative lifestyle, the adjustment was difficult, but within the year most of the RACC were accepted as members in the Hoover church. But in 1963-64 the community experienced new tensions over some of the same issues. In the context of these difficulties, some of the original RACC moved back to Tennessee. A few years later they reunited in principle with the Hoover church, but eventually the Tennessee group faded, as participants left for other congregations. Between 1978 and 1980 the Hoover group, which still included some of the descendants of the original Amish Christian Church, moved from Pennsylvania to Kentucky. This community has grown in numbers and continues up to the writing of this book.

For those interested in exploring this story more fully, this book is a superb collection of original source material. The author allows the participants in various points of the story to tell the story from their perspectives through the letters that remain or other accounts of particular points in the life of the movement. There are personal stories about the congregational decisions that were made, individuals' descriptions of their homes, and some



accounts of communal life, as well as the seminal doctrinal statements of the group.

While it provides the resources initially needed to examine this movement, this volume does not give much time and space to interpretation and reflection on the movement, functioning more as a seemingly exhaustive collection of sources and essays, rather than as a unified account. The pictures and detailed appendices offer a great deal of material that could be explored more fully. A reader will want to give some attention to the chapter outline provided on the last page of the introduction to organize their reading and research. As it stands, this volume functions very well as an initial snapshot of a particular kind of congregational experience that has been repeated in many different forms in church history. More time and treatment will help us develop a more complete understanding of both the Amish Christian Church and the patterns of church history in which we all participate.



Dale Shenk teaches Bible and church history at Bethany Christian Schools in Goshen, Indiana. He has written a variety

of study materials for Herald Press, as well as a pastoral training curriculum for Lancaster Mennonite Conference and Eastern Mennonite University. He has served as a pastor, overseer, and conference moderator in Indiana and Pennsylvania. Dale lives in Goshen with his wife Trish and their three children.

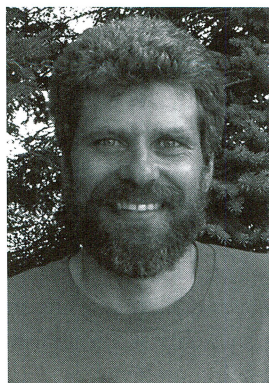
## ... John K. Yoder Endnotes continued from page 9

### (Endnotes)

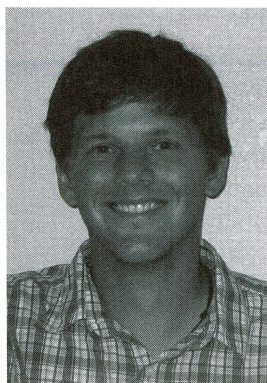
- <sup>1</sup> James O. Lehman, *Creative Congregationalism: A History of the Oak Grove Mennonite Church in Wayne County, Ohio* (Smithville, Ohio: Oak Grove Mennonite Church, 1978), pp. 79-91, provides at present the most extensive coverage of Bishop Yoder's leadership in the formation of the Amish Mennonite denomination. However, it is written from the vantage point of the Oak Grove congregation and does not focus wholly on his input in the formation of the Amish Mennonite denomination.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 66-67.
- <sup>3</sup> Biographical sketches of many of the ministers whose names appear in this paper, including that of Bishop John K. Yoder, may be found in Paton Yoder and Steven R. Estes, *Proceedings of the Amish Ministers' Meeting, 1862-1878* (Goshen, Ind.: Mennonite Historical Society, 1999), pp. 307-386.
- <sup>4</sup> John K. may, or may not, have moved immediately on to that farm of about 160 acres which a surveyor's map indicates that he owned in 1873. It was located about four miles east of Smithville. This map of Green Township, Wayne County, Ohio, is reproduced in Paton Yoder, *A Yoder Family History: Jacob, Samuel, Jonathan* (Goshen, Ind.: n.p., 1980), p. 19.
- <sup>5</sup> *Creative Congregationalism*, pp. 41-42 and 45-50.
- <sup>6</sup> David Beiler to Moses Miller, Oct. 14, 1851, in Paton Yoder, *Tennessee John Stoltzfus: Amish Church Related Documents and Family Letters* (Lancaster, Pa.: Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 187), p. 37.
- <sup>7</sup> *Proceedings* (of the first annual *Diener Versammlung*), p. 5.
- <sup>8</sup> "Historical Origins of the Amish Ministers' Meetings, 1862-1878" in *Proceedings*, p. xvii.
- <sup>9</sup> *Creative Congregationalism*, p. 81.
- <sup>10</sup> Paton Yoder, *Tradition and Transition, Amish Mennonites and Old Order Amish, 1800-1900* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1991), pp. 166-168.
- <sup>11</sup> See *Proceedings*, pp. 28-29, 73, concerning Jacob Rupp, and 119-120, for discussions within the *Diener Versammlungen* concerning baptism and regeneration, and *Tradition and Transition*, pp. 184-186, for the way the ministers of the *Diener Versammlungen* dealt with the Egli movement.
- <sup>12</sup> See Egli's letter to Bishop Yoder, Feb. 6, 1866, in *Proceedings*, pp. 262-264, and an exchange of letters between the two in 1880, dated March 19 and April 16, in the historical manuscripts of John K. Yoder, Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen, Ind. For a brief account of the Egli movement, see Grant M. Stoltzfus, *Mennonites of the Ohio and Eastern Conference from the Colonial Period in Pennsylvania to 1968* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1969), pp. 103-104.
- <sup>13</sup> For the defection of the Stuckey congregations of central Illinois, see *Proceedings*, pp. 131-161, and *Tradition and Transition*, pp. 187-192.
- <sup>14</sup> For Bishop Yoder's support of the temperance movement and other reforms, see *Mennonites of the Ohio and Eastern Conference*, pp. 140-143.
- <sup>15</sup> For further information concerning the naming of the denomination which had its origins in the *Diener Versammlungen* of 1862-1878, see *Tradition and Transition*, pp. 26-27, 201, 207, 261.
- <sup>16</sup> "Wahre Wächter," *Herold der Wahrheit*, March 1880, pp. 43-44.
- <sup>17</sup> "Bericht der Verhandlung der Distrikt Konferenz, gehalten in Wayne Co., Ohio, am 22 and 23, März, 1883," pp. 121-122.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> *Proceedings* for 1864, pp. 45-46.
- <sup>21</sup> Paton Yoder and Silas Smucker, *Jonathan P. Smucker, Amish Mennonite Bishop* (Goshen, Ind.: Silas Smucker, 1990), p. 45.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 44.
- <sup>23</sup> *Creative Congregationalism*, pp. 104-108.
- <sup>24</sup> Naomi King Slonecker, granddaughter of said Jonathan Yoder to Paton Yoder, grandson of Jonathan Yoder, Feb. 29, 1980, quoting her mother, Linda Yoder King (Jonathan Yoder's daughter and the wearer of one of these newly designed dresses). This letter is in the possession of Paton Yoder, Goshen, Ind.
- <sup>25</sup> *Mennonites of the Ohio and Eastern Conference*, pp. 152-153.
- <sup>26</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 140-143, for Grant Stoltzfus' more favorable evaluation of Bishop Yoder's leadership.
- <sup>27</sup> *Creative Congregationalism*, pp. 104-111.
- <sup>28</sup> For Grant Stoltzfus' summary and evaluation of the "Decisions" of the committee that brought an end to the crisis, see *Mennonites of the Ohio and Eastern Conference*, p. 142.
- <sup>29</sup> *Creative Congregationalism*, p. 112.
- <sup>30</sup> John K. Yoder to Gideon Stoltzfus, April 20, 1893, translated from the German by Noah Good and Paton Yoder. A photocopy of this letter may be found in the Lydia Mast papers in the Paton Yoder Collection as part of the Tennessee John Stoltzfus documents in the Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen, Ind.
- <sup>31</sup> A photocopy of J. C. Kanagy's letter to Gideon Stoltzfus is in the Lydia Mast papers.
- <sup>32</sup> In his *Creative Congregationalism* (p. 109), Lehman faithfully records this visit to Illinois of more than a week, which John K. and his wife took in November 1889. But it appears that Lehman is mistaken when he says that Bishop Yoder made no effort to contact Joseph Stuckey, he whom the *Diener Versammlungen* of 1872 had cast off from the fellowship of that body.
- <sup>33</sup> *Herald of Truth*, Dec. 1, 1889, p. 361.
- <sup>34</sup> Such ad hoc regional or district conferences are mentioned in passing in *Mennonites of the Ohio and Eastern Conference*, pp. 152-153, and in J. S. Hartzler and Daniel Kauffman, *Mennonite Church History* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Book and Tract Society, 1905), pp. 250-251 and 306-308.
- <sup>35</sup> *Minutes of the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, 1864-1919*, Ira Johns, J. S. Hartzler, and Amos O. Hostetler, compilers (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, n.d.), p. 140.
- <sup>36</sup> *Western District A.M. conference* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, n.d.), pp. 10, 13.
- <sup>37</sup> *Report of the Eastern Amish Mennonite conference*, C.Z. Yoder arranger (Sugar Creek, Ohio: J.C. Miller, 1911), p. 1.
- <sup>38</sup> *Western District A.M. Conference*, pp. 10, 13.
- <sup>39</sup> *Report of the Ohio and Eastern A.M. Conference*, pp. 1, 3, 5, 7, 9.



# 2005 John Horsch Essay Contest



Stan Epp



Jason Kauffman



Katie Lapp



## Contest Results

### 2005 John Horsch Essay Contest Results

The results of the 2005 John Horsch Mennonite History Essay Contest were announced by Franklin L. Yoder, interim director of the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee. Eighteen students in three academic levels submitted papers on various topics in Mennonite studies. The winners are as follows:

**Class I – Seminary and graduate school:** first, Stan Epp, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary-Great Plains, North Newton, Kan., *The Place of the Great Trek in Mennonite History*; second, Bob Yoder, Western Theological Seminary, Holland, Mich., *A Historical Review of Mennonite Youth Ministry in the Past 120 Years*; and third, Cynthia Voth, Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va., *Responses to Munster: David Joris and Menno Simons*.

**Class II – Undergraduate college and university:** first, Jason Kauffman, Goshen (Ind.) College, *Faith in Prosperity: Business, Wealth, and the Mennonite Church in Fulton County, Ohio, 1930-2005*; second, Martha Miller Ruggles, Goshen (Ind.) College, *Weaving Worlds: The Diary of a Mennonite Woman During World War II*; and third, Laura Rheinheimer, Goshen (Ind.) College, *Close to the Center, Far From the Heart: The Experience of Mennonite Veterans of World War II From the Indiana-Michigan Conference*.

**Class III – high school:** first, Katie Lapp, Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite High School, *Standing for Peace in a Time of War*; second, Lindsay Kisamore, Eastern Mennonite High School, Harrisonburg, Va., *Pacifism: Past and Present*; and third, Danika Bock, Winnipeg, Man., *The Hutterites – In the World, but not of the World*.

In each class first-place winners are awarded \$100, second place \$75, and third place \$50. First-place winners also receive a one-year subscription to *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. All entrants receive a one-year subscription to *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*.

Winning papers will be posted on the Historical Committee web site: [www.MennoniteUSA.org/history](http://www.MennoniteUSA.org/history).

This year's entries were judged by Perry Bush, professor of history, Bluffton University; Mark Sawin, Eastern Mennonite University, assistant professor of history; and Walter Sawatsky, professor of church history and mission and director of Mission Studies Center, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

The annual contest is sponsored by Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee and is named in honor of John Horsch (1867-1941), the German-American Mennonite historian and polemicist who did much to reawaken interest in Anabaptist and Mennonite studies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The deadline for submission of entries for next year's contest is June 15, 2006. 🌱

**Next year's  
John Horsch  
Mennonite History  
Essay Contest  
submission deadline  
is June 15, 2006.**



## Beginnings and endings

*Aller aufgang is schwer* (every beginning is difficult), wrote Daniel H. Bender in his diary of 1909.

Bender, the founding president of Hesston College, was quoting a Pennsylvania “brother,” who was sympathetic to the immense challenges of launching a new “western” school in a Kansas wheat field. When school opened in September 1909, Green Gables had not been completed. There were no desks or tables. Meals were served in the laundry room. Outside there was no landscaping or sidewalk to cover the adhesive Kansas mud. Only half of the cost of the school building and furnishings—estimated to be \$15,000—had been pledged. Nevertheless, Bender called the first classes to order on September 22. The school in Abe Hess’s wheat field had begun.

Endings can be difficult, too. Perhaps Bender confided in his diary at end of his tenure in 1930, *Jedes Ende ist schwer*. I have finished my decade as editor of this paper and as director of the Historical Committee and Archives. I am immensely grateful for having had the privilege of serving the church as a member of the Executive Leadership Team, and as director of its historical enterprise. These years have been energizing, challenging, and gratifying. Saying goodbye is not easy.

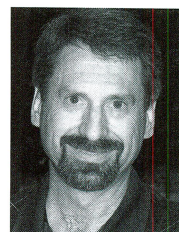
Ruth Schrock, managing editor, office manager and archives assistant, is also completing her service, after more than ten years. I am grateful for her strong administrative skills,

team spirit, and goodwill. She kept projects, including the publication of this paper, on schedule.

I invite your continued support of the Historical Committee, the archives staff, and its many programs under the new leadership of interim director, Franklin Yoder. Frank teaches history at the University of Iowa, and, until his recent appointment, has been the chair of the Historical Committee. Beth Graybill, Lancaster, Pa., has become chair in Frank’s place. Andrea Buller has replaced Ruth Schrock in the Goshen office. Dennis Stoesz continues as archivist at Goshen, and John D. Thiesen and James Lynch continue as archivist and assistant archivist at the North Newton archives.

I have begun a new era—teaching history at Hesston College and writing the history of the college for its 2009 centennial celebration. Unlike the 1909 beginning of the college, all the buildings are new or remodeled, classrooms are equipped with electronic media, and the campus is beautifully landscaped. The college is thriving. I look forward to contributing to the proverbial “Hesston experience.”

—John E. Sharp, September 5, 2005



Visit our web site at [www.MennoniteUSA.org/history](http://www.MennoniteUSA.org/history)

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